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FORTUNA FILLY



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FROM

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THE FORTUNA FILLY.

THE FORTUNA FILLY

BY
HOWEL SCRATTON



JOHN W. LUCE AND COMPANY, INC.
BOSTON AND LONDON

1907

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THE FORTUNA FILLY.

CHAPTER I.

BENNETT'S HOTEL.

THE old-fashioned English family hotel is fast disappearing, being crushed and crowded from existence by the gigantic monsters of bricks and mortar, which, within the last twenty years, have sprung up all over the West End of London.

The new style may be very charming to young people fresh from the country, who are dazzled by the gilt and the marble. It may be very elegant to call your inn the "Hotel Kensington" instead of the Kensington Hotel. It may add to the pleasure of the dinner to call the bill of fare the menu, and to scan a list of foreign names which convey nothing to the mind of the average Englishman but a sense of unfamiliarity and distrust; it may be gratifying to be served by a waiter who speaks broken English; it may conduce to one's comfort to find that one is known by a number, like a convict, that the German manager does not

know the names of the guests, and if he did, could not pronounce them.

All this may be very nice indeed, and I have no doubt that many people enjoy staying at one of these big caravanserais upon the principle on which the sojourners in a sea-side boarding-house like to dress for dinner—that it is such a change from what they are accustomed to at home, but for my part, I like an old-fashioned English hotel, with a landlord who knows one's individual tastes and studies them : with a cook who can send up a good old-fashioned English dinner, and with English waiters who have graduated in a good English household, and do not smell of garlic. Now, Bennett's Hotel in Dover Street seems to me to be as near perfection in point of comfort as one can hope to find.

Old Mr. Bennett's cheery face, with its fringe of white whiskers and silver hair, seems to speak a welcome louder than words, as the kindly landlord meets the arriving guest in the hall and conducts him to a well-furnished suite of rooms, which are sure to be snug and warm in winter, or airy and cool in hot weather.

Each suite is shut off from the rest of the hotel by its own private door, and the sets generally comprise a dining-room, a small boudoir or drawing-room, bath-room, and two or three bed-rooms.

The visitors are generally old-fashioned country

gentlemen and their families, who have patronised Bennett's all their lives, and who are as well known there as the still-room cat, and quite as much at home.

The cellar of wines is not to be equalled in London, as the port of various famous vintages has lain in the cobwebbed bins since the days long ago, when it was first bottled, and Mr. Bennett is a rare judge of claret and sherry, and has a pretty taste in champagne.

If a visitor is likely to be out late, he is furnished with a latch-key, and finds on his return that a spirit frame and mineral waters have been left on the table for his use, together with sandwiches and biscuits. The newspapers are brought to one's bed-room with the tea in the morning, and everything which can make one comfortable is done by the servants instinctively, and without one being troubled to give orders.

It was six o'clock in the afternoon of the second Friday in May, of a recent year which I do not desire more clearly to specify.

The weather was brilliant, and Piccadilly was crowded with smart equipages and pretty dresses, making a blaze of light and colour ; but of course dear, dingy old Dover Street was always quiet and sedate.

Two waiters stood languidly by the glass swing doors of Bennett's Hotel, looking aimlessly into

Dover Street, and apparently wondering why nothing wasn't anything, whilst Mr. Bennett himself was busy in his snug little room down the passage, decanting a bottle of East India sherry of fabulous antiquity.

Presently a brougham drove up to the hotel, and the two waiters sprang suddenly into activity and hastened to open the door of the carriage. Sir Robert Ashingdon and his daughter Delia alighted, Sir Robert saying, "How de do, William? —Good day to ye, James!" as he nodded pleasantly to the waiters.

"Hope we see you well, Sir Robert," chorused the latter, and Sir Robert replied, "Right as rain." At that moment Mr. Bennett appeared, bowing, and saying,

"Very glad to see you again, Sir Robert; your rooms are quite ready; same as usual, first floor."

Sir Robert took the landlord's hand, and shook it heartily.

"How are you, Bennett?" he asked; "glad to see you; should have come up yesterday for Kempton to-day, but county business detained me. However, we shall go to Kempton to-morrow, please the pigs, and I hope we shall not come home empty-handed."

Sir Robert was tall and lean, clean shaven and ruddy, with a stiff old-fashioned stand-up collar and a wide blue birdseye cravat round it. He was

of a type you might have seen any day in the sixties, but which is now getting rare.

"Indeed, sir?" replied Mr. Bennett. "I have been looking at the *Globe*, and I see your horse, Helvellyn, is second favourite, standing at eight to one. I am sure I wish him every success, sir!"

"He's sure to run well, and I think he will very likely win," returned Sir Robert. "I was down at Cottington a few days ago, and saw him do a splendid gallop—we have not tried him, and indeed why should we, as I don't bet? but John Straight is quite satisfied with him."

"I am sure I hope he will win, sir; and I really think I shall drive Mrs. Bennett down to see him do so," said Mr. Bennett; then, as an afterthought, "Will you take anything after your journey, Sir Robert? I have some very curious old East India sherry which I should like you to taste. I have had it now for three years in my cellar, but only opened the first bottle to-day, in honour of your coming; it came out of the cellar of old Lord Bembridge, and I bought it when his wine was sold after his death—may I send you a decanter?"

"By all means, Bennett," replied Sir Robert; "and send up two glasses, so that you may judge it with me."

"You are very kind, sir," and turning to the waiter, who was manipulating napkins on the table, Mr. Bennett said, "William, go down into

the office and bring up a decanter of sherry, which you will find on the mantelpiece, and two wine glasses ; and tell James to take tea to the boudoir for Miss Ashingdon."

"Very good, sir," said William as he vanished, and returned almost immediately with the sherry and two large cut-glass wine glasses upon a silver tray. Sir Robert took the decanter, and filled the glasses.

"Here's good health to ye, Bennett," he cried.

"And here's yours, Sir Robert ; and may Helvellyn win to-morrow !"

"Good !" exclaimed Sir Robert ; "and may Helvellyn win to-morrow !"

They drank their wine like connoisseurs ; sipping it, holding it in the mouth, and gazing at the glorious old red amber of the liquor as the light shone through it when they raised their glasses.

Slowly Sir Robert let the nectar trickle down his throat, until the last drop had gone ; then there was a religious pause, as when the congregation remains kneeling for a space after the minister has given his Benediction ; then he smacked his lips.

"By Jove, Bennett, if Helvellyn is anywhere near as good as your sherry, he won't be long in winning."

"That is a great compliment to the wine, sir ; and I am very glad that you find it satisfactory."

"But what do you think of it yourself, Bennett ?

You are about the best judge of wine I know; don't be modest because it is your own tap, but tell me truly what you think of that wine."

"As you put it to me like that, Sir Robert, I must confess that it is the very best East India I have ever tasted—I was only afraid the bottles might vary in quality; but this is, if anything, better than the sample I took at the sale."

"Well," said Sir Robert, "I congratulate you on having bought it; and I hope you will keep it for those who know what is good."

"Never fear, sir," responded the landlord; "sherry is out of fashion, and I should as soon think of setting this before a gentleman who was not accustomed to order that wine, however much money he might be willing to pay for it, as I should think of giving a baby five-pound notes to wrap his toys in."

Sir Robert poured out two more glasses, and the same careful and appreciative attentions were paid to them by landlord and guest; when Mr. Bennett was preparing to withdraw, James, the second waiter, came in to announce that the omnibus had arrived with the valet and the lady's maid and the luggage.

"Oh, Mr. Bennett, we shall want dinner at eight o'clock, please," said Sir Robert.

"Very well, sir, I will see to it; will you take champagne?"

"Yes; if you have any of that Pommery '89, I should like it—not much iced; and please have four places laid; I have two gentlemen dining with us to-night."

Mr. Bennett bowed and left the room, and Sir Robert went to the boudoir to see how his daughter Delia was getting on with her tea.

"Delia," he said, as he entered the snugly-furnished room where she was sitting, "I have asked young Fynes and Hamilton Rolfe to dine with us to-night."

"Oh, dad! why did you ask Mr. Rolfe?"

"Well, he was down at the Murchisons, and I met him in Belstone yesterday with Jack Murchison, and he asked me about Helvellyn, and seemed to take a great interest in racing, so I told him we should be in town to-night, and should be glad if he would come in and dine."

"I hate him," said Delia.

"Tut, tut, young lady, you use strong language; surely he has never done anything to offend you?"

"He has never done anything that I could take up, but his whole manner is offensive. He seems to think that everybody must be admiring him!"

"At any rate, you don't object to Dashwood Fynes?" queried her father, with a quizzical look.

"Of course not, dad; I like Dash very much, and always have liked him."

* Very well then, you can talk to Dash, and I will talk to Rolfe. He will have been to Kempton to-day, and can tell me all about the racing," and with that, Sir Robert left the room. He liked to chaff Delia about Dashwood Fynes; not having any idea there was anything between his daughter and his young friend, but always looking upon them as the big boy and little girl that they had been when General Fynes rented the Dower House from him some nine years previous to the commencement of this tale. If Sir Robert had had the least suspicion that any other bond subsisted between Dashwood and Delia, he would have cut off his right hand rather than encourage it. It was not that he did not like Dashwood, for he had always been fond of the boy; but he had a strong feeling that love could not exist without money to feed it, and that a man ought not to marry, however rich in prospects his wife might be, unless he could show an income of at least a thousand a year to begin life with. He had often said as much to Delia, talking generally, to warn her as he thought, by a hint, not to fall in love with any fortune-hunter, but he had never looked upon Dashwood Fynes as a possible son-in-law; and, moreover, Sir Robert had never noticed any semblance of love-making between the young people, which shows how blind we can be to things which are going on close around us!

Punctually at eight o'clock Dashwood Fynes presented himself at Bennett's Hotel, and was shown into the little boudoir where Delia sat in her muslin dress, with a pale pink sash, awaiting him.

She looked lovely; her light brown hair was naturally curly, and the La France rosebuds which she had artfully placed in the plaited coil, set off its glossiness wonderfully.

She was only a little thing, but trim and round and wiry; all quality, as we should say of a two-year-old, and she had the most delightfully impudent face I ever saw. Bright, large sparkling eyes, rosy cheeks, a tip-tilted nose with a freckle or two on it; lips thick, perhaps, but warm and red, with a perfect row of teeth shown now and then, and a little thoroughbred head poised elegantly upon a slender neck, which made one think of Mary Queen of Scots in the days when she first left the French court.

Dashwood came towards her, and she came to meet him.

"Oh, Dash," she cried, "I am so glad that dad asked you to dinner," and she took both his hands.

"You can't be so glad as I am, Delia dear," he said; "I have been wondering for the last three months when I should see you again."

"Kiss me, Dash!" she said imperatively.

Dash complied with alacrity, and had not half

finished when the door opened again, and Mr. Hamilton Rolfe was announced.

"I will tell you more about it presently," Delia said quickly, as if she had been telling Dash a story, and turned to meet Mr. Rolfe.

Mr. Rolfe was a tall, slim-waisted man of a type which you may see any day in Bond Street. His clothes fitted perfectly, his manner was self-possessed, and his collar was very high. With piercing black eyes, rather near together, an aquiline nose, and a moustache brushed up after the German fashion to show a gleaming set of long white teeth, he certainly gave one the impression that he was rather fond of himself.

"My dear Miss Ashingdon," he said, as he advanced with outstretched hand, "I am indeed glad to have an opportunity of renewing our acquaintance—I don't think we have met since I danced with you at the Belstone Hunt ball?"

"How do you do, Mr. Rolfe?" Delia answered. "I hope you are not going to try to tell me the stories you wanted to tell me then."

Dashwood Fynes clenched his fists, for he guessed what kind of stories Delia meant.

"Oh, you don't mean that story about the cat and the fiddle?" returned Rolfe, unabashed. "That is quite a drawing-room story, I can assure you, if you had only waited to hear the end."

"I don't care for stories like that, anyhow,"

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said Delia, severely, and Dash felt like a charge of dynamite that the slightest concussion would serve to explode.

However, Sir Robert came' in just then, and welcomed his guests.

"I hope the big horse is all right, Sir Robert," queried Rolfe.

"Oh yes; he was all right when I heard from Straight this morning," answered the baronet; "but I have just had a telegram from John saying he is coming to see me to-night, and he does not say a word about anything being amiss, so I expect all's well; however, we shall know the best or the worst after dinner."

"Dinner is served," announced James.

"No ceremony," said Sir Robert. "Delia, lead the way, please," and Delia proceeded to the dining-room, followed by Fynes and Rolfe, and with Sir Robert bringing up the rear.

Sir Robert sat at one end of an oval table, and Delia at the other, while Rolfe was on her right and Dash on her left hand.

The courses were simple. There was strong old-fashioned spring soup, Christchurch salmon, saddle of lamb, and Aylesbury ducklings, with forced peas and new potatoes, followed by green asparagus and pies and creams. Everything was the very best of its kind, and cooked to perfection, and the little party did ample justice to the fare

"Helvellyn was rather easier in the betting to-day, Sir Robert," remarked Hamilton Rolfe.

"The betting does not affect me personally, as I never put a shilling on," replied Sir Robert; "but of course I like to hear how the market goes, as it is an indication of the public opinion about one's horses' chance."

"They were backing that Irish three-year-old, Flannigan's Pride, to-day, and they took as little as ten to one about him—you could easily get eight about Helvellyn; and Royal Crown was firm at six to one."

"I don't think Royal Crown will beat us," replied Sir Robert; "although he did win the Lincolnshire Handicap so easily—I fancy John Straight has got his measure through something in the stable, but I forgot what it was he told me. What did John Straight say, Delia?"

"I really forget, dad; but Mr. Rolfe can ask him when he comes."

Now Delia did not really forget at all; she knew very well that John Straight has a line of Royal Crown through Phantom City, who had been beaten a neck by The Cardinal, Royal Crown's trial horse, when giving six pounds, over a mile a week or two before; and John had the best reason to know at what weights. The Cardinal and Royal Crown had been tried; but Delia did not intend to tell Hamilton Rolfe anything about this, and she was

quite sure that if any question were to be put to John Straight upon the subject in the presence of third parties, that accomplished trainer would suffer from a similar lack of memory.

“ Well, at any rate, there is no line of Flannigan’s Pride,” continued Rolfe ; “ the Irishmen think he is the best three-year-old in England, and he has only six stone six ! ”

“ We must play the game, and trust to fortune,” said Sir Robert ; “ but tell me about the other racing — how did the crack two-year-olds show up ? ”

Hamilton Rolfe hereupon went into a long and elaborate description of the day’s racing, and Sir Robert was engrossed in the story ; while Delia and Dashwood found plenty of interesting things to talk about ; and so the time passed pleasantly until dessert was put on the table, and soon afterwards William announced that Mr. Straight was waiting in the boudoir.

“ Show him in here ! ” cried Sir Robert.

Delia rose to leave the room, and the two men rose also and prepared to follow her ; for when a trainer calls on his employer on the eve of a big race, the interview is generally conducted in private.

“ Don’t go, Delia,” cried her father ; “ pray resume your seats, my friends ; there is nothing the least secret about our business ; John has

probably only called in to say how Helvellyn is doing."

Thus invited, the others sat down again, and the waiter ushered Mr. Straight into the room—a little, upright man, with a long straight nose, broadening at the end, a long, prehensile-looking upper lip, very firm mouth, overhanging eyebrows of thick sorrel-coloured bristles, and deep-set hazel eyes, which looked around with the quick alertness one sees in a monkey's (I mean no offence), and a perfectly scarlet complexion, with deep wrinkles round the nose and mouth; such was John Straight the world-renowned trainer. He held a flat-crowned felt hat in his hand, and was dressed in a dark grey mixture, with a black neck-tie, in which was a diamond scarf-pin representing the cognisance of a very distinguished personage.

"Good evening, Sir Robert; good evening, Miss Delia," said John, as he shook hands; then, turning to Dashwood Fynes, "Well, young man, and how's the law?"

Dash had known old John ever since he had been a little boy at school at Oldbury, when it was his greatest delight to slip away on half holidays, and walking the six miles between that town and Cottingham, to have tea with the trainer's family, and go to stables with the boys when the horses were done up for the night, so that the

THE FORTUNA FILLY.

city of Mr. Straight's address was not understood.

"The law is a Hass, I am afraid," replied
"or else I am a Hass for not getting more

back to it, young fellow; it is better than
racing, anyhow," returned the trainer.

Robert motioned to Hamilton Rolfe, and
Mr. Rolfe, if you don't know Mr. John
t, you have a pleasure in store; let me
ce you."

"I think I know Mr. Rolfe," said the trainer
, bowing politely; but with that in his
which did not greatly please the latter, but
thrill of joy through the heart of Delia,
knew the old man in all his moods, and did
d to catch a trifling inflection which told as
as many words.

"Well then, John, how is the horse? You can
freely before my friends."

"Delvellyn is as well as I could wish to see
r; and I took the liberty of taking a bet
t to one about him to-day, for I don't think
ill offer that when they have seen him in
rning."

"No, John, have a glass of port—this is some
Bennett's celebrated forty-seven," and Sir
passed the decanter.

Straight helped himself.

"There was something else I wanted to see you about, Sir Robert, but it is rather a private matter."

"If it is anything about horses, you can speak here before my friends," replied Sir Robert, chivalrously answering for their honour.

"Well, sir, I have heard of a filly which I should like you to buy—she's not a fashionably bred one—being by Peasant, who was hurt as a yearling and never ran; but who, you will recollect, was the brother of one Derby winner and the son of another."

"What is her dam?" asked Sir Robert.

"A mare named Fortuna, who won a good many races in France, and she is of our best blood—the filly I want you to buy is an unbroken three-year-old, and I would not have anything to do with that sort of animal at this time of year, if I did not think it would pay you well to buy her."

"Who has got her to sell?" again asked Sir Robert.

"A man named Crowden, whose brother bred her. The brother lately died, and the filly has no engagements; she is as good a mover as I could wish to see, big and lengthy, too, and sure to make a brood-mare, if she never wins a race."

"How much does he want for her?" asked Delia, who was always excited at the prospect of buying any new animal.

"I think she could be got for £200," said the trainer; "but I should like to know at once, as I must give the man an answer to-morrow before others see her. She is boxed at a public-house at Sunbury, and he hopes to sell her at this meeting."

"I will buy her, certainly, John, as you think so well of the filly; so you can tell the owner the first thing in the morning."

The conversation then resumed its wonted course of discussing the prospects of the morrow; but at ten o'clock John Straight got up and took his leave, saying that he was just going to have a look in upon a friend for half-an-hour, and then catch the eleven forty-five train to Sunbury.

"And what's more," he said, "I shall try to see Mr. Crowden to-night and secure the filly, for he is sure to have her walking about on the roads to-morrow, and with so many racing people about we might lose her. Thank goodness no one has seen her yet. I do believe she is worth a thousand."

And with these words, and his cheery face one great beam of pleasure, in anticipation of the double event of buying the much-admired filly and winning the Jubilee with Helvellyn, the trainer shook hands and went his way.

"Do you know, Sir Robert, I think I must be going too," said Hamilton Rolfe. "Miss Ashingdon must be tired after her long journey."

Delia did not deny that she was tired, and Sir Robert did not press Rolfe to stay, as he had one or two letters which he wanted to write to old friends who, unlike himself, took pecuniary interest in racing to the extent of backing their fancy for a trifle. So Mr. Rolfe found his hat and took his departure.

Dash remained for a few minutes longer, talking to Delia, and then he too said "Good night."

CHAPTER II.

THE GRASSHOPPER.

ROLFE hailed a hansom which was idling down Dover Street, and jumping in, shouted to the driver.

"Ninety-three, St. James' Place, quick!" he cried.

"Quick it is, sir," replied the man, and in a few seconds he pulled up at the door of Rolfe's chambers. Rolfe rang violently at the bell, and at the same time opened the door with his latch key.

The man-servant, alarmed at the fierce ringing met him in the hall.

"I say, Warriner," cried Rolfe, "you know Lord Vange's chauffeur, don't you?"

Warriner said, "Yes, sir; I know him well."

"Very well then, find him; tell him there is a tenner for himself if he will drive me to Sunbury in his lordship's motor. It is most important—life or death—look alive."

Warriner seized a hat from the rack, and went in quest of his friend, whom he found without difficulty at a small club in the neighbourhood,

where chauffeurs and other persons interested in the motor world are wont to meet in a room over a public-house, to discuss their adventures and prospects. Upon Mr. Rolfe's project being made known to him, Wilson, the chauffeur, at first declined point blank to lend the car ; but upon being told that it was a matter of life and death, and that a tenner might be earned, he at length consented, and in a short time was standing with his vehicle in St. James' Street. Meanwhile Hamilton Rolfe had exchanged his dress coat and waistcoat for a loud check shooting jacket, and his white tie for a red one. He had donned a big fur coat over all, and had gummed on a pair of large black whiskers and turned down his moustaches. He wore a flat motor cap, and his eyes were adorned with goggles.

"This is the gentleman who wants you to drive him," said Warriner to the chauffeur. Wilson raised his hand in salutation, and Rolfe took his seat beside him.

"I want you to drive me to Sunbury as quick as you can, and there will be a tenner for yourself for your trouble," said Rolfe.

"We shan't be long over that job," said Wilson. "The streets are all clear, and I can get you there in five and twenty minutes."

"It is half-past ten now," replied Rolfe ; "if you do the journey in half an hour, it will do."

The engine whirled, and the car darted through

the gates of St. James' Park, down the Mall, up Constitution Hill, past Knightsbridge and the Albert Hall to Hammersmith, over the bridge, and by Ranelagh gates and so to Richmond, travelling at a good thirty-five miles an hour, while the big acetylene lamps sent a glare like that of a search-light down the road. Conversation was impossible, even if Rolfe had been in the humour to talk, but his own thoughts were too engrossing.

"What a lucky chance!" he thought. "Old John Straight would not recommend Sir Robert to buy the filly unless she were really something out of the common; for, as a rule, the baronet breeds his own, and as old John says, a trainer does not want to be bothering about breaking in a three-year-old in the middle of the racing season. No—depend upon it, this is a find! Let me see," he continued, "the old man does not start until eleven forty-five, and the train is a slow one, not getting in until twelve forty—that means at least twelve fifty before he can get to the place where Crowden is staying! But the worst of it is, I don't know at which public-house Crowden is staying. I shall have to try them all—thank goodness I shall have nearly two hours to do it in."

The car rattled over Richmond Bridge and through to Hampton, and so on to Sunbury.

"Stop at the first pub or hotel where they have stabling," shouted Rolfe.

In a minute more they pulled up outside an old-fashioned country inn. The doors were closed, but there were a few men outside yet.

"Is Mr. Crowden staying here?" asked Rolfe.

"No, I never 'eard tell of 'im," replied a yokel.

"Go on, chauffeur," said Rolfe, anxious not to waste time.

They came to another house, near the gates of Kempton Park, and found several stable boys hanging about outside, some of them being plied with drink from flat bottles, which shady-looking men produced from their inner pockets.

Rolfe shouted the same question.

"No," was the reply again; but one of the shady-looking gentlemen asked whether Rolfe meant the farmer who had come there with a bay three-year-old filly.

"Yes, yes, that's the man!" cried Rolfe.
"Where does he put up?"

"I always charge half-a-crown for my information," replied the man, slipping his flask back into his pocket.

"Here you are then, fire away," exclaimed Rolfe, drawing half-a-crown from his pocket amongst a handful of other coin.

"Was you very particular to see him to-night?" asked the tout exasperatingly.

"Yes, I must see him at once. Out with the address; you've got your money."

"Information is dearer after dark," said the man.

"D—— it all then, I'll find him without you!" cried Rolfe, in a rage.

"Steady, sir, steady. I only want another half-dollar, and then I will tell you all I know."

"Catch!" cried Rolfe, throwing the required coin at the man.

"He is staying at the Grasshopper at Feltham Hill, about a mile from here, over the railway bridge and straight on," shouted the man, and the words were scarcely out of his mouth before the car had started again.

It was now eleven thirty-five, and as the motor crossed the railway bridge a train was drawing up in the station.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Rolfe to himself, "if old John Straight had come by that train instead of visiting his pal, I might not have been in time; but as it is I have a full hour's start, so that if there is any business to be done, I have plenty of time to do it."

In a minute or two more they came to the sign of the Grasshopper, and found all the lights out except one, which flickered in a latticed window over the stables.

Rolfe went beneath this window and threw a few pebbles at it.

"Who's there?" came a voice, and a red-whiskered man's head appeared at the window.

"I want to see Mr. Crowden. Do you know whether he is staying here?" said Rolfe.

"I am Mr. Crowden. What do you want, and who are you?" was the man's reply.

"I come from Mr. Phillips—he wants to make you an offer for the filly you have here," shouted Rolfe.

"Stop a minute," cried the man; "I'll come down."

In a minute or two steps were heard inside the stable and a light was seen through the window—then the door opened and the red-whiskered Mr. Crowden appeared clothed in a shirt and trousers.

Now it is perhaps needless to say that there was, so far as this transaction was concerned, no such person as Mr. Phillips, and Mr. Hamilton Rolfe was acting entirely for Mr. Hamilton Rolfe.

"What do you want at this time of night?" enquired Mr. Crowden. Then seeing the motor car and the big fur coat, both of which suggested to him that his visitor was a person of some consideration, "Can I do anything to serve you, sir?"

"A friend of mine—Mr. Phillips—heard that you had a three-year-old filly for sale, and, as he is going out of London to-morrow, he asked me to see her for him and buy her if I liked her and the price suited. I have been delayed by a breakdown of my motor car, and have only just got here, although I started some hours ago; but I should like to be able to tell him that I have seen the filly."

"It's a funny time of night to look at a horse; and mind you, sir, this filly is not going for nothing; I want a pretty stiff price for her."

"Well, my dear man, let me see her," said Rolfe, looking at his watch, which showed the time as eleven forty-five, "and I'll soon tell you what I can give you for her."

"Come in here, sir," said Mr. Crowden; "the filly is in a box in this stable."

Rolfe entered, and by the light of a stable lantern he was shown a big racing filly, dark bay with one white hind heel, a lean varmint head, if I may use a doggy simile to a horse, as others have done before me, beautiful shoulders, big hips, with great length from hip to hock, and great flat clean legs with nice round hoofs. Of course she was not in any kind of condition, but Hamilton Rolfe saw at a glance that he had to do with something out of the common, and he would have bought the filly "on his own," if he had seen her, even without the strong recommendation of John Straight.

"Niceish filly," said Rolfe; "but it will take a long time for Mr. Phillips to get her fit, if he buys her. How much do you want for her?"

"Well, sir," said Crowden, "I know very little about these things, but I know my poor brother, who bred her, said she was the finest filly in England. What should you say to four hundred pounds?"

"Four hundred fiddlesticks!" replied Rolfe;
"come, I will give you a hundred!"

"No, thank you, sir; I had Mr. Straight here to-day to look at her, and he almost promised to buy her for two hundred, but I did not say I would keep her for him; and I would not take that price from anyone else, so you can have her for four hundred or leave her."

Rolfe pretended to be going away, and walked towards the motor, muttering, "Nonsense!"

"It is no nonsense, sir, I do assure you; and I don't doubt I shall have two hundred at least from Mr. Straight in the morning, and so good night!" and Mr. Crowden made as if to shut the door. "Stop a moment!" cried Rolfe.

There was a sound of wheels coming along the road, and Rolfe had a strange feeling that he had better transact his business quickly.

Mr. Crowden appeared once more at the stable door.

"What is the lowest you'll take, to sell at once?" asked Rolfe, almost breathlessly, although he concealed his excitement from Crowden.

"Three hundred pounds!" exclaimed Crowden, with an air of decision.

The wheels were drawing nearer.

"Done with you!" exclaimed Rolfe, and he drew a note-case from his pocket, and handed three one-hundred-pound notes to Mr. Crowden.

"The filly is mine," he said.

"Yes, sir, the filly is yours, sure enough; but I should like to know the name of the buyer, and where he lives."

"It is for Mr. Phillips, of Croydon," replied Rolfe; "everybody knows him!"

"Oh, I don't doubt it," replied Crowden; "but if this filly is going to be trained, I should like to know where to look for her in the reports."

The sound of wheels grew nearer, and Rolfe said, "Come now, I can't wait any longer to-night, so let me have the filly—I will take her away now."

Crowden put a rope through the headstall that the filly was wearing, and handed it to Rolfe.

"Here you are, sir; you can do what you like with her now, for she is yours."

Rolfe started to lead her out of the stable, but at that moment a fly stopped at the Grasshopper, and Mr. John Straight came round into the stable.

"What are you up to here, Mr. Crowden?" he asked.

"Oh, good night, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Crowden. "Here's a gentleman from London who has come to see the Fortuna filly, and has bought her for fifty per cent. more than what you offered me. He gave me three hundred pounds for her!"

"Stop a minute!" exclaimed Mr. Straight. "Did not you say you would leave it over till Saturday?"

"Well, sir, now if I did, Laleham clock chimed midnight about five minutes ago, so that it is Satur-

day now anyhow, and I have got the money and parted with the filly."

John Straight concealed his anger and disappointment, and turning to Rolfe, who was keeping as much as he could out of the light of the lantern, quietly remarked :

" You've got a nice filly there, sir."

" Yeh," lisped Rolfe, in a voice so different to his own, or, in fact, to any other human voice, that John at once knew it to be assumed, and he cast a piercing glance at the whiskered visage of the purchaser.

Rolfe still wore his motor cap and big fur coat, but he had removed the goggles when he went into the box to look at the filly, so that his keen black eyes betrayed him, and John Straight knew in a moment who it was who had stolen a march upon him.

However, John was not the man to show by word or gesture that he had seen through Rolfe's disguise, so he turned to Crowden and said :

" It was a pity I did not get here first, as I should have liked the filly ; but I hope this gentleman will do well with her."

Rolfe did not speak, but Crowden answered.

" Oh, Mr. Straight, the gentleman has not bought her for himself, but for Mr. Phillips, of Croydon, and I want him to tell me what stable she is going into."

" Well, I will leave you to ask him all that,"

said Mr. Straight shortly. "I am going home to bed ; good night, Mr. Crowden."

"Good night, sir!" said Crowden, and John Straight got into his fly and was driven to the friend's house where he was staying. His feelings did not betray themselves, for John Straight, through long habit, had perfect control over his features, but inwardly a furious fire was consuming him. He had felt, after leaving Bennett's Hotel, that the bargain over the filly ought to be concluded the same evening, and instead of visiting his friend in London, as he had at first intended, he had gone direct to Waterloo and caught the 10.35 train, so as to settle the matter at once, but Hamilton Rolfe had over-reached him.

"The mean cur!" he thought, "to think of his dining at Sir Robert's table and taking advantage of him like that! I'll be even with him, though, if I have to wait years for my chance."

So soliloquising, Mr. Straight reached his quarters, and was glad to hide his rage beneath the bed-clothes.

When Hamilton Rolfe saw that there was no danger of any repudiation of the sale, and that Crowden had taken the money, and acknowledged that the filly was sold, he thought it unnecessary to take her away that night, so he put her back in her box, and told Crowden that Mr. Phillips would send for her in the morning.

CHAPTER III.

THE STADIUM CLUB.

THE automobile stood snorting and throbbing outside the Grasshopper as Hamilton Rolfe turned away, after having given his instructions to Mr. Crowden, and Wilson sat in his seat at the wheel, ready to start as soon as the former should give the word.

Rolfe lighted a big cigar and buttoned up his fur coat very deliberately, with an air of great self-satisfaction, and once more hid his sinister eyes behind his goggles.

"That is settled all right, chauffeur," he said ;
"and now you can drive me back to town again."

He then resumed his seat in the car, and after another exhilarating whirl through the crisp country air, they dashed along Piccadilly at break-neck speed and pulled up in St. James' Street, safe and sound.

Rolfe handed the promised tenner to Wilson, and with a curt "Good-night," turned round the corner and was back at his chambers in St. James'

Place in a couple of minutes ; and, having changed back from his shooting coat to evening dress, he strolled into the Stadium Club at one o'clock as if he had not left London that evening. He found a knot of men in the billiard-room discussing the prospects of the horses in the Jubilee, and seated upon the settee was young Bertie Fraser offering to open a book on the race. Bertie was not too sober, but nobody cared about that, for he was a popular youth, with the tastes of a millionaire and an allowance of five hundred a year to indulge them with.

"I want to bet on the Jubilee!—on the Jubilee I'll bet!" said he, imitating the voice and manner of a ready-money bookie.

"What price Bluewater?" asked Hamilton Rolfe, naming an outsider which he had no intention of backing.

"Bother Bluewater!" cried the amateur bookmaker. "I want to lay the favourites; do you want to back one of the favourites? Here, give me the 'Special,' someone! I'll call over the prices. Here y'are—Sixes Royal Crown. Eightses Hel—Hel—Helvellyn! tenses Flan'gin's Pride! Who'll back one?"

"Will you lay me ten hundred to one against Helvellyn?" asked Rolfe.

"No! you blanky blighter, I said eightses that one!"

"No bet!" said Rolfe, turning away in the

expectation that his refusal of the bet would lead to the offer of a higher price.

"Tell you what I'll do," said Fraser, hiccupping. "I'll lay you eight hundred to one that horse, if you want to bet!"

"Eight hundred and fifty, if you like," replied Rolfe calmly.

Bertie Fraser slapped his book. "Come on then, my noble punter, eight hundred and fifty to one hundred it is!"

Rolfe produced a small betting book and noted down the bet.

"Want any more?" asked Fraser, elated at his proud position as the club bookmaker.

"Yes; if you like, I'll take it again," replied Rolfe.

"Four times! six times, ten times, if you like!" shouted Fraser, in a state of great excitement.

"Ten times," replied Rolfe, without moving a muscle.

"Ten times, it is!" vociferated Fraser. "I bet you eight thousand five hundred to a thousand against Helvellyn! You remember that, all you boys!"

Rolfe put the bet down, amidst great excitement in the room, for bets of such magnitude were not often made in that club; and besides, it was well-known that Fraser's slender income did not justify him in laying them.

"Have a drink now!" shouted Fraser. "Here, marker, ring the bell."

The marker obeyed, and the waiter came in and received orders for drinks.

"Anyone want to back anything else?" asked Fraser, and there being no response, he closed his book and put it in his pocket.

"I've got a blessed nice one-horse book," he said; "and now I hope old blooming Helvellyn will break his ugly old neck!"

Rolfe left shortly after this, feeling very well pleased with his night's work: he had bought a filly which old John Straight valued at a thousand for three hundred pounds, and moreover he had out-manceuvred that astute trainer in the matter; and he had taken a bet of eight thousand five hundred to one thousand about Helvellyn, and hoped to be able to hedge at six to one on the race-course, for he knew that when one of Sir Robert's horses was brought fit and well to the post, the public would always support him.

So that it was with a feeling of general satisfaction with the world that Hamilton Rolfe went back to his chambers.

When he had left the club a few of the men remained with young Fraser in the billiard-room, and they began to take that young man to task for betting so heavily.

"What do you want to go and make a one-

horse book for?" asked Charley Blake; "you don't know anything to go for, and Helvellyn may be at five or six to one to-morrow, and then you will have a job to get out."

"I wish I hadn't laid him, now," said Bertie; "but that chap Rolfe gives me the needle."

"Well, if I were you I would send him a note first thing and offer him fifty to be off your bets; say you don't know enough bookies to be able to get your hedging done."

"Would that be all right to do?" asked Fraser.

"Yes, if you write your note now, before you hear anything more either way about the betting; and I will take the note round. I expect I shall catch Rolfe before he goes to bed," answered Blake.

"Right oh!" cried Fraser, "I'll write him the note." So saying he went to a small writing table, and, assisted by Blake, wrote a note to Rolfe explaining that he had acted precipitately in offering the bets, and suggested paying £50 or £100 to be off, adding that he was not in a position to pay if he lost such a large sum as he had wagered.

"There," said Blake, "I think that ought to manage it. Rolfe can't feel ill-used, because either he can get the same bets elsewhere, or he came into the club and picked you up, because you are a drunken young swine," and he patted Fraser on the shoulder affectionately.

"Swine yourself!" said Fraser, squaring up to him.

"Go on, Blake; don't waste time now!" interposed the others, "take the note to Rolfe and see what he says." Thus adjured, Blake left the club, and the rest played a game of snooker pool.

In a quarter of an hour Blake returned, looking very crestfallen.

"What did he say?" was the chorus.

"I saw Rolfe," answered Blake, "and he said he'd see Fraser damned first."

"Very well," said Bertie. "I suppose I shall get the knock! Waiter, take orders for drinks!" and the waiter did his duty once more,

CHAPTER IV.

HELVELLYN.

THE sun shone brightly over the emerald turf of Kempton Park at half-past six on the Saturday morning which heralded in the Jubilee Day.

Horses in thin sheets were walking about on the Round Course, and trainers and jockeys were gathered together in little knots criticising the condition and action of the various animals.

Mr. John Straight was there, waiting at the junction of the Round Course and the Jubilee Course, and Sam Player, the fashionable middle-weight jockey, stood beside him.

Mr. Straight had on a pepper-and-salt suit, with thick boots and trousers turned up, and he wore the square-crowned felt hat without which he was never seen out of doors.

Sam Player wore loose breeches and gaiters.

"Here he comes," said Mr. Straight, as two horses, each clothed in white sheets and ridden by stable-boys, came down the road from the stables, followed by Teddy Buckle, the head lad.

"What's that a-leading him?" queried Sam, nodding in the direction of the horse which preceded Helvellyn.

"Phantom City," replied the trainer. "I don't run him, although I have not scratched him in case anything should happen to the crack, but I shall strike him out this morning."

"Nice 'orse, though," muttered Sam Player, meditatively, "and not a bad performer. I should think he would have run if you had not had old Hel?"

"He's a good, fair horse," replied the trainer; "but we've got something a bit better than that to stand on. Helvellyn can make rings round him!"

"So?" said the jockey, as he looked at Phantom City, who was a big chestnut, full of muscle, and walking so lightly that he would not crush an egg.

"Look at this!" said John Straight, with pardonable pride, and Helvellyn strode past them.

The horse stepped proudly, and like machinery his feet were lifted and put down again. He was a great brown horse, nearly black, and he wore white cloths on his forelegs. He was perhaps the heaviest horse in training, but he carried his size and weight as if it were a feather. The skin on his neck was sleek and shiny, and the blood vessels stood out like pieces of cord beneath it. He looked like some splendid horse of bronze.

"Now, Sam, what do you think of that?" asked John Straight.

"He looks like a winner," was Sam's answer.

"Yes; I shall be surprised if he does not turn out to be a winner," said John. "But it is time to mount; Phantom City will bring you along a nice half-speed gallop of six furlongs, and you will see how Helvellyn goes."

Thereupon the stable-boy dismounted, and Sam Player mounted Helvellyn, and he proceeded down the course, walking very sedately, but with the firmly-planted step of conscious power, and Phantom City went in front, rather excited and going sideways, with his neck arched and his knees lifted high, as if he felt proud that he should be selected to be the pioneer of the great Helvellyn.

The horses went down the course towards the mile starting-post, and presently Phantom City turned and seemed to stand on his hind legs for a moment. Helvellyn also turned, and Phantom City came bowling up the course as if he realised that he had got a good start from Helvellyn and meant to keep it. Helvellyn started about four lengths behind him and came along quite imperturbably, as if such a thing as catching up his leader was too easy to be troubled about seriously, whilst Phantom City was making the best of his way home, evidently being under the impression that they were racing.

Presently they passed the spot where John Straight stood, and he waved his hand as a signal for the riders to ease up, for the Phantom was making it a bit more than half speed. Nevertheless Helvellyn was going well within himself and with his head in his chest, the rhythmical action of his feet never changing. The ground reverberated under the strokes of his hoofs with a sound like the piston of some great steam-engine, and he was galloping in the Phantom's heels.

Sam pulled him up very delicately and slowly, so that no blame could possibly be attached to him for what happened, but somehow or other, when Helvellyn had very nearly stopped, he suddenly faltered, and the next moment was standing on three legs, with his near hind foot barely touching the ground.

Sam slipped off his back in an instant, and John Straight came running to the spot.

"What's the matter, Sam?" John inquired, anxiously.

"Don't know! Just as I was pulling up he seemed to give in the pastern. I think he must have strained himself."

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said John, lifting the horse's foot and examining the hoof, "this is the second bit of bad luck I have had to-day already."

"He might get all right in a minute or two?" suggested Sam,

"No, it is worse than that. He won't be able to run to-day. Get him home before they see too much of it," said John, and the boy led Helvellyn slowly round by the stand and down the far side of the course, where he was free from observation. He was certainly lame, and not fit to run that day, and now the question arose — what was John to do?

"You know that other one did not go badly," said Sam, hoping to offer some consolation.

"I tell you, he's not half the horse Helvellyn is," said John Straight; "but Sir Robert likes to see his colours, so perhaps he will run him. Can you do seven stone nine, if I should want you, Sam?"

"Yes, if you say the word. I can waste a couple of pounds this morning, and that will about do it."

"Very well then, waste; and mind you keep your mouth shut."

"Trust me!" said Sam.

Mr. Straight spent a very busy and worrying morning. Helvellyn's leg gave some trouble; although it was not a very serious strain, yet it was enough to prevent such a valuable horse being risked, and fomentations, bandages, and other remedies had to be applied.

Phantom City, on the other hand, seemed none the worse for the gallop, and, indeed, was in the highest possible spirits; it seeming clear to his

equine mind that he had had a race with the crack of the stable, and had not only beaten him, but broken him down ; so the Phantom was naturally in the greatest good humour, and believed himself capable of racing any horse in England with credit and success.

Added to this, it seemed to him that his lad paid, if possible, more attention than usual to his toilet ; polishing his coat till it shone like a mirror, and working up a beautiful diamond pattern upon his rump, and even going to the length of plaiting his mane very carefully and neatly.

"That's right, old fellow !" exclaimed the lad, as he slapped the Phantom's side ; "we shall 'ave to depend upon you to-day, after all. Let them see what you can do, old man !"

The Phantom turned his head, and, setting back his ears, raised his lip and showed a fine set of teeth, in a playfully threatening manner, and the lad stroked his muzzle affectionately. At that moment Mr. Straight entered the stable, and the lad, touching his forelock, commenced again to wipe the horse's side with a rubber, making a characteristic hissing noise the while.

"We shall want this horse to-day, Stowers ; so be careful with his water. I am going to let him take his chance in the big race." The lad saluted again, and replied—

"Very good, sir," and the Phantom raised both

hind feet very slightly and brought them down again in the straw with a thump, to signify that he perfectly understood and was quite ready.

We will now leave Mr. Straight to attend to the manifold duties which devolve upon a trainer on the morning of a great race day, and return to London.

CHAPTER V.

" IF YOU DON'T SPECKERLATE, YOU'LL NEVER WIN ! "

DELIA was up early and out for a walk by the water in St. James's Park, where she loved, when in London, to watch the water-fowl.

She had made no appointment with Dashwood Fynes, but she shrewdly expected to meet him there, as she had casually mentioned that she was going to feed the ducks before breakfast, and sure enough, she found young Dash waiting upon the bridge.

Having thrown her bread to the birds, she said, "Come along, Dash; we will walk down one of these paths. I want to have a talk with you." Dash was only too willing, so they went along by the side of the lake, following a path which was very little frequented at that early hour.

"You are coming with us on Lord Thistleton's drag to Kempton, Dash?" said the young lady.

"I don't think I had better go, Delia," replied Dash, with a tone of regret in his voice. "You see things can't go on like this. I love you and you love me, don't you, dear?"

"You know I do, you old booby," she replied archly.

"Very well then, I don't see how we are going to marry! I have only three hundred and fifty a year, and I do not seem likely to make much at the English Bar, and so I have been thinking of emigrating to India or the Cape, where I think there might be a better opening."

"Emigrate! and leave me!" asked Delia, raising her eyebrows and looking at him with an expression mingled of wonder and witchery.

"What can I do, darling?" he asked; "you know Sir Robert would not consent to your marrying me as I am now situated, and if you will wait a few years, I may be able to make a position."

"A few years, Dash! Have you considered what that means? Why, only yesterday you were complaining because you had not seen me for three months, and now you talk of going abroad and leaving me for a few years as if it were nothing!"

"I must make money, and I don't see how I can do it quickly here," replied Dash ruefully.

"Listen, Dash. I have an idea!" cried Delia.

"What is it, darling? I will do anything you like."

"How much capital have you got, or can you raise, Dash?"

"Why, what are you going to propose, you little fairy?" asked Dashwood, looking lovingly

at Delia, whose bright eyes and heightened colour showed that she was very much in earnest.

"Answer my question, sir!" replied Delia, trying to look like a cross-examining counsel.

"My father left me nine thousand pounds, and I suppose I have spent about a thousand of the principal—the rest is all well invested, and would realise about eight thousand four hundred if I sold out everything," replied Dashwood.

"Very well then, Dash; I am going to make a gambler of you."

"A gambler! Why, I never touch a card, except at whist; and scarcely ever had a bet above a pound or two in my life," cried the astonished Dash.

"No matter, there is plenty of time to begin, and we are going to begin to-day. We shall begin small and feel our way. I will be the head of the firm, and you shall be the staff!"

"What do you propose to do, then?" inquired Dash wonderingly.

"We are going to have a flutter on dad's horse for the Jubilee."

"But supposing we lose, we shall be worse off than ever."

"No, we shall not. I have thought of that. If we lose all you've got, it will take us at least a year to do it, and then I shall be twenty-one, and my own mistress."

"I admit that, and I shall be twenty-seven, and stone broke," replied Dash; "I don't see that that helps us much."

"Goose," cried Delia.

"Why?" asked Dash, and as no one was near, he put his arm round her waist and kissed her.

"Because, if I am twenty-one and you are stone broke, I will marry you and we will emigrate together."

"Delia!" exclaimed Dash.

But Delia continued, "I was at a fair at Oakwood once, and there was a man with a roulette table there, and he induced the yokels to gamble by repeating, 'If you don't speckerlate you'll never win.' The words rang in my ears, and I shall never forget them. We are going to 'speckerlate.'"

"Sir Robert would be less likely to consent than ever if he thought that I was a gambler," rejoined Dashwood, meditatively.

"Very likely; but I do not propose to acquaint dad with my purpose," quietly replied the little plunger.

There was a pause, in which there was some more osculation.

"Give me my orders," said Dash at length. "I am ready to obey them!"

"You will go to your bankers and draw out three hundred pounds as soon as the bank opens."

"Three hundred pounds! Why, I have not more than seventy or eighty to my credit."

"Very well then, the more reason for going early. You will see the bank manager and arrange for an advance against your securities."

Dash looked at Delia with wonder.

"How do you know anything about advances against securities, I should like to know?" he said.

"I know a lot of things which may come in useful; but tell me, can you do this or not?"

"Oh yes; I can do it easily enough, I daresay."

"That is step number one. The second step is to get your money on. Do you know any good bookmakers?"

"I only know a few ready-money men in the ring, and I have not had much business with them."

"I will arrange matters, then. Take my card to number 14, Colville Place, St. James'. It is called the Colville Club. Ask for Mr. Walter Nuthall, and tell him you are a friend of mine. He is a charming man, and he often stays with Mr. Straight at Cottington, so I am sure he is honest. Say you want to back dad's horse to-day, and ask him to put you a hundred pounds on at starting price, and offer him the money."

"Very well, dear; and shall I tell him the name of the horse?"

"No! I don't like the name, because it begins with 'Hel'! which is an unlucky syllable; so

just say you want to back Sir Robert Ashingdon's horse for the Jubilee Stakes."

Dash smiled at the reason for not mentioning the horse's name, but accepted his instructions.

"Yes," he said.

"And say you want fifty on for a place as well."

"That makes one hundred and fifty pounds; it seems a lot of money to risk."

"Not for a gambler: remember, please, that we are a firm of gamblers, and that I am the head!"

"Yes, sir," replied Dash, bowing in mock humility. "And what is the next step?"

"The next step is that you are to be at Lord Thistleton's house at half-past ten sharp."

"It does not leave much time to do all this."

"It leaves you ample time, if you are smart. Now I must go back and you must start off to your business. Good-bye, partner; and remember it is Victory or Westminster Abbey—a fortune or the Cape!"

And with these words Miss Delia Ashingdon took leave of her lover, leaving him in a state of delightful perplexity as to whether he ought to have accepted Delia's proposition or not; but it seemed, in any case, to open up a better prospect of a speedy marriage than any plan which had occurred to himself.

The business which Dashwood Fynes had with the manager of his bank was transacted without

any difficulty, and he made his way to number 14, Colville Place, to interview Mr. Walter Nuthall.

The Colville Club was rather like a first-class doll's house, with a miniature front door leading into a miniature ante-room, where a diminutive page sat behind a kind of little counter, and to this official Dashwood Fynes presented his card and asked to see Mr. Walter Nuthall.

The page took the card upstairs, and returned in a moment to request Mr. Fynes to ascend the staircase.

Dashwood followed the page, and found Mr. Walter Nuthall at breakfast in a room decorated with sporting pictures, plaster casts of salmon, stuffed stags' heads, and other trophies, and with guns and fishing-rods stored away in glass cases. There was a tape machine in a corner and several comfortable arm-chairs, besides a leather-covered sofa which filled one wall of the room.

Mr. Nuthall rose to greet his visitor, and said very politely,

"Excuse me for receiving you thus, but it is very early for visitors; pray take a chair and tell me your business."

Dash sat down in one of the arm-chairs, and had leisure to observe that Mr. Nuthall was a small, healthy-looking man, faultlessly dressed, and with tiny hands and well-booted feet. He wore a suit

of dark tweeds, and his clever, honest face was most prepossessing.

"This card is my introduction," said Dashwood Fynes, presenting Delia's card. "Miss Ashingdon told me that she had met you at Cottington, and as I want to have a bet and did not know where to go, she recommended me to call on you. I sent you my own card by the page, and I may add that I am at the bar, and have chambers at 37, King's Bench Walk."

Mr. Walter Nuthall glanced at the card and replied, "Delighted, I'm sure, Mr. Fynes, to do any business for you. This, I may say, is our scale of commission, and these are the rules to which we strictly adhere;" and he handed a card and a printed paper of rules to Dashwood.

"I want to back a horse for the Jubilee Stakes at Kempton Park to-day," said Dash.

"I shall be happy to get you the best morning price, or would you like to have it at S.P.?"

"S.P.?" queried Dashwood. "Oh, starting price, I suppose; yes, at starting price, if you please."

"Very well, Mr. Fynes; how much do you want on, and what is the horse's name?"

"I want to back Sir Robert Ashingdon's horse, and I should like one hundred pounds on him to win and fifty for a place," answered Dashwood, feeling as if he had proposed to commit some

criminal act ; and fumbling in his pocket at the notes which he carried there.

"Sir Robert's horse—why, that's Helvellyn, I suppose?"

"I do not know the name ; but it is Sir Robert Ashingdon's horse that I want to back," answered Dashwood, carrying out his instructions to the letter, but feeling that he was straying slightly from the path of truth in saying that he did not know the name, for he was morally sure that it was Helvellyn.

"Very well then, I will put it down as Sir Robert's best, for he has Phantom City in the race as well, although he is not given as a probable starter."

"Yes, if you please, Sir Robert's best ; and here is the money," returned Dash, pulling out his notes.

Mr. Walter Nuthall raised his little white hand in deprecation—

"No, no, we don't take money in advance here ; you will settle on Monday, please."

Dashwood's clean-cut features flushed as he felt that he had committed some sort of solecism.

"I am sorry," he said. "I thought that, as you do not know me, you would like to be sure that I intend to pay. I am not a betting-man, and am only accustomed to risk a pound or two ready money in the ring, on rare occasions."

"Don't mention it !" exclaimed Mr. Nuthall.

"The only thing is that we have to be so careful in these matters, and we have to fight shy of ready money. I only wish we could take it, for then our clients would not bet so heavily, and their payments would be more regular."

"Very well then," continued Dash; "I may take it that you will put me on a hundred to win and fifty for a place on whichever Sir Robert runs?"

"Not quite that, for he might run both; and in that case your money would be on the one which started at the shortest price, and so would be presumably his best."

"Quite so, that will suit me," said Dashwood Fynes, and he shook hands with Mr. Nuthall and prepared to withdraw.

"Can I offer you anything?" asked the latter; "a glass of old champagne, or a brandy and soda?"

"Many thanks, no; it is a little too early," laughed Dash, and he made his way down the stairs and into the street, greatly relieved at having so far carried out the orders of the "Managing Director."

He jumped into a hansom and told the driver to take him to Lord Thistleton's house, and the horse set off at a good brisk trot.

Dashwood Fynes laid back in the cab and wondered where fate was leading him. He was, as he had said to Delia, not a gambler. It was not

from any horror of gambling nor from any idea that it was immoral—he had no feeling of this sort—but it seemed to him that to be successful one must devote the whole of one's time to the pursuit, and that an amateur did not start upon equal terms with a professional. Besides, he had spent the last six years of his life in hard work, and his Saturdays and Sundays were generally spent in playing golf. Having taken his degree in law at Cambridge, with a first-class in the tripos, he had been called to the bar, and had entered the chambers of the well-known Mr. Twitterton, where he had settled down to conscientious study ; and, being endowed with keen wits, a fluent tongue, and a good presence, he was looked upon as a young man of great promise ; and Mr. Twitterton once said that he had no doubt Fynes would some day be earning his bread at the bar, although, perhaps, by that time he would have no teeth to bite it with.

But although Dashwood was not a gambler, this fact did not prevent his feeling the tingle of excitement that the backing of a horse for what one considers a large sum engenders.

I think it is the enjoyment of this excitement, and the thirst for it, which makes men bet more heavily than they can afford ; and I once heard a man of moderate means say, when a friend expostulated with him upon the magnitude of his

wagers, "My dear fellow, I don't care for winning or losing, unless I *feel* it."

At any rate, Dashwood felt it this morning, and the sensation was novel, and perhaps on the whole pleasant.

"If I do lose," he thought, "it is really not such a very big sum of money, after all ;" but that horrid little Inward Monitor, who is always putting in his word when one would like to forget him, said, "This is only the first step ; you are pledged to become a gambler, and you are risking your small fortune, the money which your father left you, to gain a large stake and a charming wife, or to ruin yourself and emigrate."

"But she will emigrate with me, if I lose it," expostulated the other half of Dashwood's mind.

"You could not ask her to do so ; and you could not take her, even if she insisted," replied the Inward Monitor.

"I know it," admitted Dashwood, and the little Monitor was silent.

CHAPTER VI

TRYING TO GET OUT.

HAMILTON ROLFE rose at nine and dallied contentedly over his breakfast, with a sporting paper stuck up in front of him against the tea-pot.

He was not a rich man, but he had always contrived to live well; and, being possessed of an unlimited amount of impudence, he had succeeded in getting himself into a good set.

He was one of those men who hang on to the skirts of Society as the star-fish hangs upon the shell of the oyster, waiting for an opportunity to insinuate its deadly tentacles when the unsuspecting bivalve shall open its doors. And as the star-fish, having established its footing, proceeds to prey upon the mollusc, so Hamilton Rolfe was now preying upon Society. At billiards, pigeon shooting, cards, racing—in short, at any game where the gambling element predominates, Hamilton Rolfe was sure to be a bit more than useful, and entirely unscrupulous.

He was accustomed, by fair means or otherwise,

to get the best of the bargain in any of his speculative transactions, and he thought with extreme satisfaction of how he had gotten the better of the fuddled Bertie Fraser. He looked over his betting-book once more and chuckled as he read the wagers he had written down there the night before.

"I like his cheek!" he muttered; "wanting to be off these bets; why, it will cost him three or four hundred to get out! By Jove! though," he added, "I hope the young fool will be able to get his covering done, or I may not get the money."

He was counting, even thus early, upon the success of Helvellyn, being quite unaware of what had happened at Kempton in the early morning; for, of course, the paper which he was reading had been issued before the news of the injury to Sir Robert's champion had reached town.

He finished his breakfast leisurely, and then sauntered out into St. James's Street to take a stroll in the sunshine.

As he passed the corner of King Street a boy, carrying the earliest edition of an evening paper, came running down the street, with a hand-bill fluttering in his hand, on which was printed in enormous letters — "Accident to a Jubilee Favourite!"

Rolfe pulled out a halfpenny and snatched a

copy from the boy, and, opening it, he read in the column reserved for Stop Press news the ominous announcement :

"Helvellyn pulled up lame at exercise this morning."

"Curse it!" he exclaimed, as he crumpled up the paper and dashed it on the pavement. "Curse it! I might have known, that something or other would happen! The devil looks after drunkards, and he was looking after young Fraser last night!"

His face was not a goodly thing to look upon just then, as his eyebrows met over his flaming eyes, and white wolf-teeth gleamed wickedly.

"What a fool I was not to take young Fraser's money and scratch the bets! Perhaps it is not too late, even now, if I can find Fraser before he gets to know this. I will go to the club and see whether he is there."

So saying, he turned his steps towards the Stadium, where, as luck would have it, he saw Bertie sitting in the smoking-room, looking a good deal the worse for wear, and holding a big tumbler in his trembling hand.

Rolfe entered the room, and, after nodding to Fraser, sat down and picked up a sporting paper, which he pretended to peruse in an unconcerned manner.

"Latest betting, midnight, 5 to 1 Royal Crown,

6 to 1 Helvellyn, 9 to 1 Flannigan's Pride," he read slowly.

Then turning to Fraser, who, from his careworn appearance, had evidently not heard of the accident to the horse which he had peppered.

"I say, Fraser," he began, "you did not mind the message I sent by Blake, did you? Of course I will let you off your bets, if you like; but I was tired last night, and a bit boozy too, so I am afraid my language was not parliamentary. I only thought that your offer was hardly enough, and I have come round this morning to arrange matters with you, if you still want to scratch the bets."

Fraser turned a bleary eye towards him, and replied, "Thanks, Rolfe, you are very good; but I am afraid it is too late now, as Blake, like a good chap, has gone out to see some bookmakers to try to get them to hedge the bets for me. He will be back here directly, and we will see what he has been able to do," and Fraser dreamily took another pull at his tumbler.

Rolfe's face clouded, and a sour look came over it.

"Oh, as you please, of course; but I thought that as you might have a difficulty in your covering, and you say that you are not in a position to stand the money yourself, I might do you a turn by looking you up this morning. However, there is nothing more to be said!"

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Just then Blake came rushing into the club like a runaway traction engine.

"Fraser, old man!" he cried, "Helvellyn is scratched! He pulled up lame at exercise this morning, and does not run. I met Satterthwaite of the *Sporting Career*, and he told me. Luckily, I have not done any hedging!"

It took Fraser some moments to realise what this news meant to him, but when he grasped the fact that instead of being in the direst trouble, he had suddenly become the winner of a thousand pounds, he dropped his glass on the floor and danced round the room, singing a popular song.

"Helvellyn scratched?" exclaimed Rolfe, in well-assumed astonishment; "impossible! you are surely mistaken?"

"Why, Rolfe had only just come in to offer to cancel my bets; but I told him I could do nothing until you came back," cried Fraser. "What a bit of luck for me, to be sure!"

"Humph!" growled Blake; "seems rather curious that Rolfe should not have heard of it. Why, the newsboys have got it on all the bills in the street now! I saw one just outside!"

"There was nothing of the sort when I came in," replied Rolfe, fiercely; "but I must be going. I have other things to do, and can't stay wasting my time here all the morning!" and he strode sullenly into the street.

"Nice beauty!" exclaimed Blake, when Rolfe had relieved them of his presence. "What a lie about not knowing! Why, he came to try to get you to have the bets off, hoping that you would not have heard! But come, Bertie, old man, you can't stay boozing here all day. Pull yourself together and come to Kempton! It is not often one can start the day with a thousand profit on one's book."

Bertie professed himself not only willing, but anxious to go racing, and the two chums fetched their race-glasses and sallied forth together.

CHAPTER VII.

WHY NOT RUN THE PHANTOM ?

A BEAUTIFUL yellow drag stood at Lord Thistleton's door, harnessed to a team of splendid bays, and already preparations were being made to start.

As Dashwood drove up, Lord Thistleton came down the steps talking to Delia, and Sir Robert followed with Mrs. Vasher Baines, a fascinating widow, who wore the latest Paris fashion in gowns, and whose cheeks were not altogether innocent of artificial bloom.

Hamilton Rolfe and the two Felton girls, the Ladies Doris and Chloe, brought up the rear. Dashwood took off his hat, and Delia bowed, but her face was white and nervous-looking, and Dash saw at once that something was wrong. Sir Robert showed no trace of any unusual emotion ; he laughed and flirted with Mrs. Baines, and seemed in the very best of humours. As for Hamilton Rolfe, he looked as if some terrible catastrophe had befallen him, and his black eyes, always too near together, seemed now more intimate than ever,

while his frowning eyebrows almost met over his large nose.

"How do you do, Fynes ?" said his lordship. "I am very glad to see you—take your places, please. I claim Miss Ashingdon to sit on the box beside me."

Dashwood made a suitable reply, and the whole party climbed upon the drag.

Delia turned round to Dash, who was sitting behind her, and said in a low voice,

"Have you heard ?"

"Heard what ?" asked Dash.

"That Helvellyn has strained his pastern, and will not be able to run."

Dashwood was learning to keep his countenance, and not a movement betrayed his agitation, but he said quietly,

"I put a little money on Sir Robert's best this morning—will he run anything ?"

"That has not been decided yet," said Delia. "Mr. Straight will meet the drag when we arrive, and it will be settled then. There is Phantom City to fall back upon, but he is not very reliable ; still," she added, as if the matter were no concern of hers, "if you put your money on at starting price, you will not lose it if we don't run one, and I will take care that dad does not run the Phantom unless John Straight thinks he has some chance of winning."

"What's that?" asked Sir Robert, overhearing the mention of his own name.

"We were saying how unlucky it is that Helvellyn should have strained himself," replied Delia, "and I told Dash that you might run Phantom City in his place."

"Oh yes; but Helvellyn might have won outright, while I hardly expect Phantom City to get into the first three," replied Sir Robert. Then, turning to Hamilton Rolfe, whom he knew to be a betting man, "I hope you have not backed Helvellyn?" he asked.

"Well, yes; for a trifle," answered Rolfe; "I went into my club last night and took a little bet about him."

"Then I am sorry your money has gone; and I cannot advise you to back the other, unless John Straight has a better opinion of him than I have."

The coach rolled on, and in due time reached the race course and took up its place in the enclosure reserved for drags. Here John Straight was waiting, and Sir Robert promptly jumped down and went up to him.

"Well, John, this is bad luck," he said.

"Yes, Sir Robert, it is very bad luck; and not the only piece of bad luck I have had to-day."

"Why? What else has happened?" asked Sir Robert, anxiously.

"That filly that I wanted you to buy was sold when I got back," said John.

"Oh, that does not matter, John ; very likely she would have been no good if we had got her." John would not look upon it in this way, but he made no reply.

They had strolled away from the drag, and were out of hearing of its occupants.

"What about running Phantom City ?" asked Sir Robert.

"Well, sir, if you had asked me that question yesterday, I should have said that he had no chance ; but seeing that Helvellyn is out of it, and you like to see your colours, I think you might start him. He is quite ready, and he did the best half-speed gallop this morning that I have seen him do for many a day—the horse is fit in himself, in fact."

"Well, then, we will run him on the off-chance ; the ladies will like to see him run."

"Very good, sir. I told Sam Player to get down to the weight, and he has wasted for it."

"Let us have a glass of wine, John. I see that they are getting it out," said Sir Robert, pleasantly.

They walked back to the drag, and each took a glass of wine. Just as John Straight was putting his to his lips, a groom from a neighbouring carriage dashed blunderingly by, and knocked the glass from his hands, shivering it to atoms.

"Piece of bad luck number three," remarked

John ; "luck goes in threes, and I hope that is the last for to-day, and no doubt I am better without the wine on a race day."

Another glass was quickly poured out and proffered to John, but he steadfastly refused to take it, saying, "No, I will not drink till I drink the health of the winner," and with that he went to the paddock to look after his horse.

"Does he fancy Phantom City, Sir Robert ?" asked Hamilton Rolfe.

"I can't say that I think he does, very much," replied the owner. "He says that it is worth running him, as he might perhaps win."

"Oh, I know those 'might wins,' but I never saw one do it," exclaimed Rolfe, rather rudely. "But I am going over to the ring to see how they bet ;" and so saying he swung himself down from the drag and crossed the course, and entering the reserved lawn by the gate which leads thither from the race-course, he was soon in Tattersall's ring, where the bookmakers had already begun to assemble.

CHAPTER VIII.

"WHISPERS."

KEMPTON PARK looked at its best. The gardens were bright with flowers; groups of pretty women chatted merrily on the lawns and touted their male acquaintances audaciously for the latest tip. Hungry crowds of members and their friends thronged the luncheon rooms and tents in search of lobster and champagne, and the Hungarian band discoursed sweet music.

All was bright and gay and jolly. Ravishing dresses were everywhere, and the place was a whirl of lace and silk and lingerie, of tiny shoes and tempting ankles, of rosy cheeks and glancing eyes and coquetry and laughter.

But Rolfe was distinctly off-colour. He had been obliged to go down on Lord Thistleton's coach, because he dared not do otherwise, having accepted the invitation of that hospitable nobleman, but he felt that his own affairs demanded his serious attention, and he had not contributed at all to the hilarity on the road, his mind being

full of the matters which so seriously affected himself.

He knew that his mood accorded ill with the bright sunshine and the general joyousness of the scene around him, and his prime desire was to get to the ring and pick up information.

"A thousand pounds of dead money to begin the day with!" he muttered to himself; "this is a nice hole to be in. I shall have to find a good winner to get out on, or young Fraser will have to whistle for his money. Three hundred spent last night on that filly—I wish I had the ready now, for this is Saturday, and it is not a nice day for the 'getting-back stakes,' with only Sunday between it and settling day! Yes, and by Jove, I must do something about the Fortuna Filly, for I can't leave her at the Grasshopper. I must find 'Whispers,' and get him to take her for me, and run her in his name, for I don't want it to be known that she belongs to me, or Sir Robert will guess what I did after leaving his hotel last night. I wonder if old John Straight spotted who I was? He seemed rather sick at losing her, anyhow!"

"Whispers" was the registered telegraphic name of Mr. William Beale, of Epsom, as well as the familiar appellation of that gentleman upon the race-course. His well-known advertisements appeared daily in the sporting papers in the following style—

“To Sportsmen.—A gentleman, well-known in racing circles, and in the confidence of several prominent owners and trainers, has some especially good things for next week. Good men only telegraph ten shillings for champion wires. Success guaranteed. Telegraphic address — ‘Whispers,’ Epsom.”

And it happened that Mr. Beale had upon several occasions been able to render services to Hamilton Rolfe. Rolfe found him seated upon the bottom step of the Grand Stand, holding in his left hand a large piece of bread overlaid by a red and juicy steak, from which Mr. Beale was cutting mouthfuls with a pocket knife. He had sent off his final wires, and was now partaking of a well-earned luncheon.

“Hullo, Whispers,” cried Rolfe; “I want a word or two with you.”

“Fire away, governor,” replied Mr. Beale, with his cheek pouched out with steak.

“We will go round to the refreshment room; we can talk more privately there,” returned Hamilton Rolfe.

They sought a quiet corner of the bar, and Rolfe asked Mr. Beale what he would drink, and “Gin and soda,” was the reply.

“Gin and a whisky, with a soda divided, please, miss,” demanded Rolfe.

When they had been served, Rolfe began in a

low voice, "Look here, Whispers, I've got a three-year-old filly that I want you to take over and run for me. I can't run her in my own name, as there was a little unpleasantness between myself and a friend about which of us was to buy her, and I don't want him to know that I have got her."

"You don't forget the Rules of Racing, about nominations being made in the name of the *bonâ-fide* owner, I suppose?"

"Of course I don't forget that, but who is to know? You won't let the cat out of the bag, I am quite confident."

"You may rely upon me," replied Whispers; "but what about the man you bought the filly from? Did not he know who he was selling her to?"

"No, for he only saw me by lantern light, and I was disguised—besides, he's not a regular racing man, and never saw me before. I did not tell him my name, but said I was buying the filly for 'Mr. Phillips, of Croydon.' Nobody knows that it is I who bought her."

"Whew!" whistled Mr. Beale, "how very mysterious; quite a romance of the turf, I am sure! However, I will take the filly with pleasure, and do what you wish about her. Where is she now?"

"At the Grasshopper, at Feltham Hill, and I should like you to send for her and say that Mr.

Phillips wants her. The man who sold her to me is named Crowden, and he expects her to be sent for to-day.”

“ Very well, I will see Dick Jodrell and tell him to send for her this afternoon. I suppose you would like Jodrell to train her ? ”

“ Yes, Jodrell is a very decent trainer ; and, by the way, the filly is unbroken, so he will have to set to work with her as soon as he can.”

“ Right you are,” said Whispers ; “ I will see to that,” and having finished his drink, he went to the paddock to look for his trainer.

Jodrell was a general practitioner—he trained a few flat-racers and a few jumpers, and he rode steeplechases, and hurdle-races, and if he got the chance he was ready to ride nine stone on the flat ; but his services were not often in requisition in that department.

His employers were all “ little men ; ” book-makers who found keeping a horse or two in training was a good advertisement, sporting publicans who now and then had a plater for the same reason, and Mr. Beale himself, who found that the reputation of being the owner of race-horses helped him immensely in his profession as a tipster, besides the value of a knowledge of his own horse’s form in making a collateral estimate of the quality of those belonging to other people.

Mr. Beale found Jodrell near the weighing-room,

and soon gave him instructions as to sending for the filly.

Jodrell was very glad to have her, as his string of flat-racers was attenuated in point of numbers, and in quality it was distinctly deficient ; so he quickly promised to have the filly taken to his stables that same afternoon, and to do all he could for her.

When Whispers left Jodrell, he was joined by Hamilton Rolfe, who wished to know that everything had been satisfactorily arranged.

"It is all right, governor ; you leave it to me, and I will see that the filly is well done, and let you know when Jodrell has broken her and got her a bit fit, so that we can ask her a question. But what are you standing for the big race to-day ?"

"Well, Whispers, I have got into a bit of a tangle over it ; I put a pot of money on Helvellyn last night, only to find that they run Phantom City instead, and now I don't know what to do to get round."

"Have you done the Phantom at all ?" asked Whispers.

"Not I ; I don't fancy him a bit !"

"Well, all I can say is that I saw him do a rousing good gallop this morning, and he went like clock-work. Of course Helvellyn was pulling over him ; but then I should think, by the size of the lad who rode the Phantom, that he weighed as much.

as Sam Player, who was up on old Helvellyn, and if so, all I can say is that the Phantom must have a pretty good chance this afternoon, for he has only got seven stone nine, and I would sooner back him after what I saw than Helvellyn with his nine stone. You must remember that it was not a question of Helvellyn being lame, for the horse never went lame till he pulled up, when he must have twisted himself somehow; and it is my belief that if they had been running a trial at the Jubilee weights, Helvellyn would never have seen the way the Phantom went!"

"Rats!" exclaimed Hamilton Rolfe. "I was talking to Sir Robert Ashingdon this morning, and he does not fancy his chance at all."

"Rats or not," replied Whispers, "and with all due deference to Sir Robert's opinion, I say that the Phantom went thundering well, and what's more, I have wired him win and place to all my subscribers, and have got a bit on him each way myself."

Rolfe was in a state of indecision unusual to him, and he resolved to seek out John Straight and ask for his final opinion. He was not long in finding the worthy trainer, who was engaged in an animated conversation with Sam Player. Rolfe waited in the neighbourhood until John's interview with the jockey had terminated, and then strolled casually up to the old man.

"Well, Mr. Straight," he said, "what is the latest news about Phantom City?"

"The horse is all right," replied John, laconically.

"But would you advise me to back him?" inquired Rolfe.

"No, not for a penny!" said John; "although he would win if all the others fell down, very likely."

John, the honest and truthful, had not swerved from the line of strict veracity, but he had effectually stalled-off Hamilton Rolfe by declining to advise him to back the horse, while it was self-evident that the Phantom might win if the others fell down, whatever he might do under other circumstances.

Rolfe had got his answer, and assuming a cheerfulness which he was far from feeling, he said,

"Well, I wish you luck!" and retired to seek inspiration elsewhere.

"There you go, my fine fellow," said old John to himself, as he gazed after the retreating figure; "that's all you'll get from me. I should like to win this race, if it were only to put you in the cart! but I'll make you pay dear for the Fortuna filly someday; anyhow, if I live long enough!"

And the expression of Mr. John Straight's features was by no means so benign as usual.

CHAPTER IX.

"DON'T !"

"WILL you take me to the paddock, Dash?" asked Delia.

"Charmed, I am sure; come along," responded Dash, and escorted her to the boxes in the inner paddock, where Mr. John Straight was busy with his charge.

Delia opened the upper part of the door and peeped in. John was there, with his head lad and the lad in charge of the horse.

"I will come out, miss," he said, not caring to worry the horse by having a lot of people in his box; so he came forth and closed the door.

Delia had formed a plan, as was her wont, and straightway proceeded to put it into execution—the plan was none less than to take John Straight into her confidence and enlist his sympathies on behalf of herself and her partner in gambling.

"Mr. Straight," she said, as they walked along under the trees, "you have known me since I was a little child."

"Yes, I have known you nearly all your life, Miss Delia," he answered, affectionately.

"And you have known Dashwood Fynes a long time, too," she proceeded.

"Yes, I have known the young radical a long time, too," Mr. Straight assented.

"Now if I let you into a secret, will you promise—*promise faithfully*, not to tell anyone, but to help us?"

"I think I know the secret without your telling me—*young dog!*" he said as he playfully shook his fist at Dash.

"No, no, dear Mr. Straight, that is not the same secret," she exclaimed, laughing and blushing.

"Well, what is it then?" he asked.

"You promise faithfully not to tell?"

"Yes; bless you, Miss Delia, I promise."

"And you will help us?"

"I will see about that, but anyhow I will keep your secret."

"Dash has got some money on Phantom City, and I want to know whether you think he will win."

"He has certainly got a good chance; he is better to-day than he has ever been in his life, and he might win."

"Then he will win," she cried; "he will win. I know he will. He must! for our sakes."

"I think I know the other part of the secret,

too," said old John, with a sly twinkle in his eyes.

"I expect you do," she said; "how could anyone look at my Dash and not guess it; but that is only one other part—the third part is that we want to win a lot of money so as to get an income from it to get married on."

Mr. Straight gave a characteristic whistle.

"How much do you want to win?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know; forty thousand pounds perhaps; but anyhow, we want a lot."

"I should think you did," remarked John drily; "you don't scruple to open your mouth."

"Well, we are going to gamble, and we want your advice."

"Then my advice is *don't*," he exclaimed.

"Oh, that is only a copy from *Punch*; I suppose you would copy him further and advise us not to marry?" she asked, rather petulantly.

"No, no, I don't say that; but Sir Robert does not approve of gambling, and I cannot encourage you to begin it."

"Well, in every other stable there is some connection of the owner's who gambles on the horses, if the owner does not do so himself; and I mean that Dash and I should do the gambling for ours."

John looked at the pretty, wilful girl in astonishment; but he saw clearly that there was no object

to be gained in thwarting her, so he felt obliged to conform to her will.

"Then you must back our two-year-olds—we have a fine lot of two-year-olds this year, and when we run a good one, you must back it and back it again until it gets beaten, and then follow up the one that beats it. Two-year-olds are much more reliable to bet on than handicap horses."

"Then you must let me know when to bet, and I will instruct Dash to put the money on," agreed Delia.

"Very well, Miss Delia; and now I must get back to my horse," and so saying, the veteran trainer, whom the sporting scribes delighted to call "the master of Cottingdon," raised his hat and turned back towards the boxes.

Delia and Dashwood crossed the paddock to return to the drag, and as they passed the weighing-room they came face to face with Mr. Walter Nut-hall. Delia bowed, and Walter and Dash raised their hats.

"Good morning, Mr. Nuthall," said Delia. "I am glad you were able to do the business for Mr. Fynes. He is an old friend of ours, and he wanted to have a bet on Helvellyn."

"Yes, Miss Ashingdon, I was very glad of the introduction; but the bet is on whichever Sir Robert runs, and I hear that Helvellyn has met with an accident, and is scratched."

"Helvellyn is scratched, but we run Phantom City—what price do you think that will be?"

"I heard them offering twenty-five to one in the ring just now. I could have got fifty yesterday, if I had had instructions," said Nuthall.

"I would not have taken a hundred to one yesterday," replied Delia, "but things are different to-day. I don't know how it is, but I am positively certain that Phantom City will win—I hope you will have something on, Mr. Nuthall."

"Thank you, Miss Ashingdon; he will be a good winner for the firm, for we have sent away Mr. Fynes' money; and, in fact, I think we have backed him a little ourselves."

"Well, do you know anything for us to back in the first race?" she asked.

"You might have a little on Lara: I hear he has a good chance," replied Walter Nuthall; "and if you wish to back him, Mr. Fynes, I will do anything you desire."

Dash looked at Delia.

"You might have twenty-five pounds on," she suggested.

"Yes," said Dash, "I should like to have twenty-five pounds on Lara, please."

"Very well," said Nuthall, "I am going to the ring, and will put you a pony on."

"Delia," said Dashwood, "you know much

more about this sort of thing than I do, I suppose, or you would not blindly take a tip to back a horse that you never heard of before ; but it seems to me to be chucking money away to go and back any horse you hear mentioned."

" Yes, Dash, dear, you are right," Delia answered ; " but it is necessary to have someone to do our business, and I want to get in touch with a few betting people, so that we may not attract attention when we begin to bet heavily."

" Bet heavily ! don't you call a hundred and fifty pounds on one race, and twenty-five on another, before the first is decided, betting heavily ? "

" Not what I call heavy betting, Dashwood, dear ; I will show you what heavy betting is presently, if we have any luck to start with."

Dashwood was appalled : he feared where the gambling mania, as he considered it, would lead them, but Delia read his trouble in his looks, and continued,

" When we have finished this business, and either won enough to live upon in England, or been obliged to emigrate, I swear, and I want you to swear also, that we will never make another heavy bet again ; but until we have settled the matter one way or the other, we will have no qualms about how much we back a horse for."

" I will swear your vow gladly," replied Dash, as they reached the drag, and found that the ser-

vants had laid a very attractive luncheon upon a table behind it.

The rest of the party had gone over to the members' enclosure, so Delia and Dash sat down to picnic, and in the midst of their repast they were aroused by shouts of "Lara, Lara wins, ten to one on Lara," and they just had time to climb up on to the box seat to see the horse they had backed pass the post an easy winner.

"Can you tell me, sir, what the winner started at?" inquired Dash of a man who had just returned from the ring.

"Seven to one, I believe," replied the other, as he passed on.

"Thank you!" said Dashwood. "That means a hundred and seventy-five pounds," he added, turning to Delia.

"Dash, dear, it was a good thing we met Mr. Nuthall!"

"Yes, darling; we stand now to win a big stake if Phantom City wins, and be still twenty-five pounds to the good if he loses."

"Hurrah, Dash!" cried Delia. "Now we will go to the paddock and look at the horses, and we won't have another bet until after the big race. I think we ought to find Mrs. Baines, and see what they are all doing."

Dash agreed, and they made their way across the course in search of the rest of the party.

CHAPTER X.

FLANNIGAN'S PRIDE.

SOON after Sir Robert and Lord Thistleton came up to John Straight, who raised his square-topped hat.

"Now, John," said Sir Robert, "we should like to see the horse."

"I am just going to take him into the far end of the paddock, Sir Robert; and if you and his lordship would stroll down there, I could join you in a couple of minutes."

"Very well, John, we will go there and wait for you," and the two old friends sauntered leisurely over the grass. By the water they came across Mrs. Vasher Baines and the Felstones, with Delia, and they all went on together to await the coming of Phantom City.

Several horses were walking about, and, as the second race had just been run, everybody was trooping into the paddock to inspect the cracks.

Royal Crown was there, looking bright and

muscular, and he was followed by a crowd of admirers.

Then came Flannigan's Pride, the dark Irishman. He was escorted by a posse of snub-nosed, wizened, small-eyed Hibernians, all whispering and chuckling, and betraying their confidence by the strenuous efforts which they were obviously making to look unconcerned. The Pride was undeniably a grand horse, but he hardly looked as if he had yet attained his full powers. He was a great rough angular colt—a brown with a good deal of grey in his coat, and grey hairs in his mane and tail. He stepped out as if he could stride over a town, and the much-exposed whites of his eyes gave him a wild and savage expression. However, he was undoubtedly a dangerous customer, and there were many who resolved that he should not be a loser for them.

Bluewater came next, a pretty little light-boned mare, with a feather-weight, and not much chance even then.

"Here comes ours!" said Sir Robert, as Phantom City approached them, led by Stowers, and followed by his trainer, who carried a racing saddle and bridle.

"He looks well, Bob," said Lord Thistleton. "I had no idea that he was such a good-looking horse."

The Phantom had cooled down since the morning, but it was evident that he was at the very

height of his health and condition, and he walked past his owner's party with the light, elegant action which ever distinguished him.

"Oh, Sir Robert!" cried Mrs. Vasher Baines. "What a beauty he is. May I stroke his neck? Does he like running? Does he know he is going in for a race? Oh, I must have a pound on him!"

The Phantom was pleased at the admiration which he excited, and John Straight told the lad to stop. Mrs. Vasher Baines approached the horse gingerly as she put out her hand to pat his neck, and the horse being desirous to show his appreciation, laid back his ears and skinned his teeth in his most polished manner.

Mrs. Baines gave a scream and snatched away her hand, and the scream startled the Phantom and caused him to plunge.

"Walk him round," said John Straight quietly, for he did not want his charge upset just before the race; and then, turning to the lady, "That is only his play, ma'am; he would not bite anyone for worlds; but horses are better kept quiet until after they have run. Then you can pat them as much as you like, if they deserve it."

Several friends joined the party, and amongst them, Sir Philip Stokes, the well-known judge, whose knowledge of horse-racing and all that appertains to it is equal to his knowledge of the law of England, and that is unsurpassed.

He was a little bald-headed, wrinkled old man, with a pair of dancing steel-grey eyes and a puckered-up mouth which looked as if it were trying to strangle a laugh. He wore a tall hat, jauntily on one side, and a well-fitting frock coat and white waistcoat, a pair of yellow kid gloves, and a big yellow rose in his buttonhole to match, shepherd's plaid trousers, and patent leather boots.

"I hope you are going to show me the winner, Miss Ashingdon," he said as he saluted the ladies, smiling and showing a set of regular and very white teeth, of the kind which never ache, and can be taken out at night and cooled in a glass of water.

"Yes, Sir Philip," Delia answered, "I believe I can. We are waiting to see Phantom City saddled, and my tip is, back him!"

"Delia," said her father, "don't be absurd. You know the horse has very little chance."

"Quite right to stick up for your own stable, my dear," said the judge; "won't you take me to have a look at your champion?"

"Oh yes, he is just going under the trees; come along, everyone, and see him saddled."

And Delia, accompanied by the dapper old gentleman, hurried across the paddock to the place which John Straight had selected for the completion of his horse's toilet.

The trainer had just put the saddle on, and was

adjusting the buckles and seeing that all was tight, and the horse was fidgetting about rather excitedly.

"Don't go too near him," said Sir Philip; "he might lash out."

"What do you think of him?" asked Delia.

"Well, my dear young lady, if looks go for anything, he must go very near to winning."

"Have you seen anything you like better?" asked the girl, anxiously.

"I was rather impressed with that great raking Irishman, and I can't make up my mind which I would rather back."

"Oh, back ours! don't back that wild-eyed Irishman!" cried Delia, "he looks as if he would eat anyone!"

At that moment they were joined by the rest of their party, including Hamilton Rolfe.

"The wild Irishman looks to me like a race-horse," answered the judge, and Rolfe agreed with him.

"Well, if you back the Irishman, you must put something on ours as well, for luck," returned Delia.

"Very well, my dear; I will certainly follow your advice—many thanks for the tip. I will go and make a bet and join you in the stand."

"No," said Sir Robert, "not in the stand. Come over to Lord Thistleton's coach and see the race from there. It always seems like old times to

watch a race from a drag instead of fighting your way through a crowd of ladies in the club enclosure."

"All right," said the judge, "I will meet you at the coach. Can I do any commissions for anybody?"

"I should like three pounds on Phantom City to win and two for a place, if you would be so kind as to put it on for me," said Mrs. Vasher Baines, producing a five pound note from a little gold-net purse which hung from her wrist.

"With pleasure, my dear madam; and can I do anything for anybody else?"

Delia would have liked to follow Mrs. Baines' example, but Sir Robert had a rooted objection to ladies betting, and so she answered,

"My father does not like me to bet, but I should have liked to back our horse if I had been allowed."

"Never mind, my dear child," said the judge; "you shall win a dozen pairs of gloves if he wins, in return for giving me the tip."

And so saying, he left the party and walked jauntily towards the betting ring, followed by Hamilton Rolfe.

As they passed the boxes, Flannigan's Pride strode by, ridden by little Pat Rooney, and followed by the Irish brigade.

"That's the danger!" cried the judge, turning to Rolfe, and pointing to the race-horse.

"Yes," said Rolfe, "he looks as if he might win."

"Win is it?" exclaimed an excited admirer of the horse. "Bedad, he'll win by a hundred yar-rds!"

"Whist, Maloney, hold your tongue; you'll be afther spoiling the market!" interposed a friend.

"Sure, I was telling the gentleman the truth, and there's no need to be so saycret now, for isn't the money all on, and only waiting for us to collect the winnings?"

Rolfe could not help thinking that the man was right, and he resolved that he would go for a big stake on the Pride. When he reached Tattersall's ring he found that the prices of the leading favourites had altered materially since the morning. Royal Crown stood at three to one, and Columbus, an American who had no place in the betting until he came with a rush within the last hour, was a strong second favourite at sixes. Flannigan's Pride was at eight to one, Batonnier, the French horse, at twelve, Sir Percevale at a hundred to seven, Bluewater at sixteen, and Phantom City at twenty to one, and others were backed at various prices.

Rolfe took eight hundred to one four times about Flannigan's Pride, but he did not back anything else, and closing his book he crossed the course and hurried to the drag, where he joined the ladies and Sir Robert.

"What have you backed, Rolfe?" asked Sir Robert.

"I have split my bets between Phantom City

and Flannigan's Pride. I could not help backing them both, as Flannigan looks so well, but the Phantom will be my best winner. I got twenty to one about him."

This unnecessary lie was prompted by Rolfe's knowledge that owners of horses do not like to think that their friends prefer some other runner's chance to their own, however little hope they may have of winning, and he thought that it would please Sir Robert and Delia to hear that he had backed their horse. He was quite mistaken in respect of Delia, for she shuddered as she heard it, but said nothing.

Lord Thistleton and Sir Philip Stokes came across the course from the ring together, laughing and chatting, and Dashwood Fynes followed them, trying not to look excited.

"Here they come!" cried Mrs. Vasher Baines, as the horses filed out of the paddock gate and walked down the course for the parade. Royal Crown led, for he was the top-weight of the party, and they paraded in the order of their numbers on the card; he was followed by Batonnier, a magnificent chestnut; then came Sir Percevale, who was expected to run well; Pimpernel, the hope of Yorkshire, in the well-known spots; Columbus, with his gaudy colours gleaming like the cohorts of the Assyrian; Dartmoor, who hailed from a little Berkshire stable; Phantom City, in Sir Robert

Ashingdon's colours, green and nasturtium cap ; Grace Darling, Bird's Eye View, Sirocco, Bombay Duck, Flannigan's Pride, little Bluewater, and seven others.

It was a pretty sight to see them walk past, the horses' polished coats flashing in the sunshine, and the bright colours of the silken racing jackets rustling upon the backs of the natty little jockeys. They came down on the course on the stand side, crossed over, and went along the rails by the carriages until they were nearly opposite the paddock gate again.

Then Royal Crown turned and cantered towards the starting post ; he went very well indeed, with a long easy stride and perfectly regular action, and a cheer went up as he passed the stand. Batonnier followed, and Sir Percevale and the rest, going down one by one and certainly looking a very useful lot, and Phantom City stole along with long, low, far-reaching strides.

When it came to Flannigan's Pride, he took hold of his bit and literally tore over the ground, and it was clear that little Pat Rooney would have all his work cut out to hold him ; there was no doubt, however that he could gallop, and his gigantic stride filled everyone with admiration.

"My goodness, what a goer !" cried Lord Thistle-ton. "I don't think I ever saw a horse stretch himself out like that."

"Yes," answered Sir Philip Stokes, "he strides big enough, but I think I liked Phantom City's action quite as well. He did not pull like Flannigan's Pride, and I would rather have Sam Player's ride than little Rooney's."

"Have you done anything more?" whispered Delia to Dashwood.

"Yes; I put on five pounds ready money with Dick Dodd; I thought I should like to have to receive the hundred at once if Phantom City wins," and Dash produced a little black-and-white betting ticket.

"Put it away; you might lose it," said Delia, and Dash replaced the card in his pocket.

"Hallo!" cried Lord Thistleton, "what's that? I do believe Fynes has been having a ready-money bet! Here, come on, we'll have a glass of wine to drink to your coming home jingling!"

"I could do with 'a moothfae o' the acid,'" replied Dash.

"What's that? Is that a joke?" asked Thistleton.

"Only a tale I heard about a Scotch miner who was going down in the cage with the mine-owner and some scientific friends who were going to make some observations. They had a bottle of sulphuric acid and a bottle of whiskey with them, and as they descended, the pitman reached out for the whiskey bottle and took a good draught

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under cover of the darkness—then suddenly his voice was heard. ‘Stop the machine—strike a licht! A hae taen a moothfae o’ the acid!’ That is why I said I’d hae a moothfae.”

“Well, here’s a different tap of acid,” said Lord Thistleton, laughing, “and here’s good luck to Phantom City.”

“Come along up!” cried Delia; “the horses are at the post, and may be off any moment.”

Thus adjured, the men climbed to their places, and after a few minutes’ delay, the white flag was seen to fall.

“They’re off!” went up a great shout from the crowd, and every eye was strained to distinguish the positions of the favourites.

Then a belated trumpeter on the top of the grand stand realised the position and tootled his instrument.

The field came sweeping along the far side of the park, and little Bluewater was seen to be leading on the rails, followed by Sir Percevale and Dartmoor, with Phantom City well up, and Flannigan’s Pride out wide on the left. Very soon Dartmoor had got level with Bluewater, and at the turn Phantom City got in on the rails and took up the running, with Flannigan’s Pride still going wide, but not losing his position, for all that.

They came into the straight, and shouts could be heard for Phantom City, who was going as well

as he had done at exercise in the morning. Then Flannigan's Pride tore across the course, and passing in front of all the other horses, lay alongside of Phantom City, and it was clear that Rooney could not keep him straight.

The two horses raced side-by-side, two clear lengths in front of the others, and then the Pride shot out with a neck advantage. Player took hold of Phantom City and tried to make up the lost ground, but Flannigan's Pride, who had evidently taken control, lay across him and tried to throw the Phantom over the rails.

Player quickly realised that he was in a hopeless position, so he eased his mount and passed behind the Irish horse, and so gained an open course on the near side. Then the Phantom stretched out, and was quickly at the Pride's girths, but that erratic animal thereupon bore across to the stand side of the course and carried Phantom City with him, and it looked for a moment as if both would finish in Tattersall's Ring. This disaster was, however, averted, and Flannigan's Pride steadied himself and made straight for the winning-post, which he passed a length in front of Phantom City, who refused to come again after his bumping. Royal Crown was third, a couple of lengths away, and the Frenchman, Batonnier, was fourth.

No sooner had they passed the post, than the excited Irishmen who had come with Flannigan's

Pride rushed up the course to cheer the winner, and the seething crowd which had lined the rails closed in behind them.

Delia was very white: she said nothing, but her lip trembled and her race-card dropped from her hand.

"Don't be downhearted, my dear," said Sir Philip Stokes; "if ever a horse deserved to be disqualified that one does, and I'll bet you five to one yours gets the race!"

A shout arose from the ring, "Six to four on Phantom City!"

"Listen," said Sir Philip; "they all saw it; the boring was unmistakable."

CHAPTER XI.

DISQUALIFIED !

HAMILTON ROLFE leapt from the drag and ran across to the weighing-room, just in time to see Flannigan's Pride led thither by his trainer, with all his jubilant admirers in his wake. Then came Phantom City, who also was led right up to the weighing-room door.

"Objection !" announced the official at the door, with studied impassiveness.

"Objection !" screamed the Pride's party, without waiting to inquire the grounds thereof. "Why, he niver touched the other hoss. He niver so much as went near him ! He was in front from start to finish, and the second was never so near him as when they finished. There was niver a bump at all, and if there was, 'twas Phantom City that bumped our hoss !"

"Clear the gate, please !" was the official's reply, and two or three policemen kept the approach to the weighing-room free. Rolfe made his way back to the Ring to see how the betting on the objection

was going, as he was inclined to hedge if he could do so at a reasonable price, but to his surprise he found that the bookmakers had already decided what the outcome of the case would be, and were themselves offering five to one on Phantom City getting the race.

The excitement in Tattersall's was intense; men ran about with their books in their hands, offering to lay fabulous odds that the winner would be disqualified, and Rolfe found that it would be impossible to cover his bets except at a ruinous sacrifice.

He shrugged his shoulders, and went moodily back to the Paddock.

On the lawn he met Mrs. Vasher Baines, who was beside herself with excitement.

"Oh, Mr. Rolfe!" she exclaimed, "how splendid this is. I do wish they would make haste and disqualify that horrid Irish horse, don't you? I had sixty pounds to three about Phantom City, and ten to two for a place—oh, it is glorious!"

"I am afraid you will lose your big bet," replied Rolfe, showing his white teeth malignantly; "I saw no bumping of any sort, and I am certain that none occurred—all this bother is because the second belongs to a popular owner, and the Irish party are disliked, but the stewards cannot act on that; they dare not disqualify Flannigan's Pride!"

"No boring!" cried Mrs. Baines; "why, every-

one saw the boring ! Sir Philip Stokes said so before the horses passed the post ! the men in the Ring saw it, and even Sir Robert said his horse was interfered with ! ”

“ Owners always talk like that,” muttered Rolfe ; “ but I must get back to the Paddock and see what is going on,” and so saying he strode down the slope and through the gates of the Club enclosure to the weighing-room.

There was a great crowd round the door, and just as Rolfe arrived a number of persons pushed their way out, and the word was passed from mouth to mouth that Flannigan’s Pride had been disqualified and the race awarded to Phantom City.

Rolfe was a good loser, in the sense that he could conceal his feelings ; but it cost him an effort to control his features as Dashwood Fynes, with a face beaming with elation, came up to him and shouted, “ Hurrah ! ” in his ear.

He turned round fiercely.

“ It is a damnable piece of iniquity ! that’s what I call it ! ” he exclaimed, regardless of his surroundings. “ The stewards must have backed the second—the thieves ! ”

“ Permit me to say, sir,” interposed Mr. Satterthwaite, who happened to be standing near, “ that you are absolutely alone in that opinion ; and allow me to add that in impugning the honour and honesty of the stewards you are rendering

yourself liable to be expelled from the race-course ! ”

“ Who the devil spoke to you ? ” asked Rolfe, in a towering passion.

“ You spoke publicly, and I took upon myself to rebuke you, sir. You have no doubt lost your money, but that is no reason why you should attack the stewards for doing their duty. Besides, it is well-known that they do not bet, so your scurrilous accusation falls to the ground ! ”

And Mr. Satterthwaite looked at Rolfe severely through his gold-rimmed spectacles.

“ Go and eat coke ! ” cried Rolfe, as he turned on his heel and wandered out into the paddock.

“ That gentleman belongs to a class that the Turf would be well rid of,” said the journalist, as he gazed at the retreating figure of Rolfe.

Dash felt a tap on his arm, and found Mr. Walter Nuthall at his side.

“ Let me congratulate you, Mr. Fynes ; I hope that this will be only the beginning of a series of successes. The horse started at 20 to 1, and 5 to 1 for a place, so that you win £2,250, and £175 on Lara : that is £2,425. Quite a big win ! ”

“ By Jove ! ” cried Dashwood Fynes, grasping the hand of the commissioner and shaking it warmly. “ I never had such an experience in my life ! Why, forty pounds is the largest sum I ever won before.

I don't know how to thank you for doing my business for me, and for the tip about Lara ! ”

“Don't mention it, pray ! ” replied Mr. Nuthall. “I am very glad to have been able to be useful to you, and Phantom City has done our firm a good turn, I can assure you ! When you came on Miss Ashingdon's introduction, and backed him this morning, my partner and I telephoned off and covered him well ourselves, so you see that it was a bit of luck for us that you came round.”

“By the way,” said Dash, “that reminds me that I must go to Tattersall's ring and draw some money. I put on a fiver with Dick Dodd.”

“Well, don't go that way ! ” cried Mr. Nuthall, as Dash was making for the gate which leads on to the course, and through which a great stream of people was passing.

“I must ! I am not a member,” replied Dash.

“Not a member ? Well, then, you ought to join ; it saves a lot of trouble and inconvenience, and what's more, it saves time in getting from the ring to the paddock ; and at racing, more than anywhere else, perhaps, time is money. But I know all the directors, and I will find one of them and ask him to pass you through. We might have just a little glass of wine to celebrate the glorious victory, and then I will go with you to draw your money.”

Just then one of the directors passed, and Nuthall accosted him.

"Oh, Mr. Parker, excuse me, but this gentleman, Mr. Fynes, is a friend of Sir Robert Ashingdon, and he wants to go into the Members' Enclosure with me, but he does not belong. Would you kindly pass him through?"

"Oh, certainly, with pleasure; any friend of Sir Robert's is welcome, I'm sure; but really, you ought to join the Club, sir."

"I should only be too glad to do so," returned Dash; "and I shall ask Sir Robert to propose me."

"And if you will allow me, I shall have great pleasure in seconding you," beamed Mr. Parker; "perhaps I may be able to hurry on your election; but now give me your race-card, and I will write a pass upon it."

Dash handed his race-card, and Mr. Parker wrote a few words on it and said—

"Show this at the gate."

Dash murmured his thanks, and Nuthall led him away, and having shown his credentials and passed the guarded gates in safety, they proceeded to the little bar in the corner of the big luncheon room, where they ordered a bottle of "the boy," and drank to Phantom City's good health and good luck to each other.

CHAPTER XII.

TATTERSALL'S RING.

DASHWOOD FYNES never enjoyed a glass of wine more thoroughly. He was tired and excited from the long-continued strain on his nerves, and the Perrier Jouet went down like nectar, and he gave a sigh of contentment as he put down his glass.

"That seems to 'touch the spot'?" queried Walter Nuthall.

"My dear fellow," replied Dash, "I was simply dying for it, but I did not know it till you proposed coming in here and having a drink. The long wait while the horses were at the post, and I was trying to look unconcerned, and then the suspense while the objection was being heard, were a pretty good trial to my self-control."

"Well," said Walter, "you looked as cool as an old hand at the game, whatever your feelings may have been. I had my glasses on your party, and I noticed you never seemed to turn a hair. But now, if you are ready, we will go and receive your money, and then I will introduce you to some of

the leading bookmakers, for you will want to know who to bet with if you are going to take up racing regularly. Of course I shall always be glad to do anything for you if I am at a meeting, but I seldom go except on the big days; and besides, there is more fun in putting your own money on, and fencing with the bookies for a good price."

Dash was quite ready, so they left the refreshment room and went, by a narrow passage, under the stand and across the lawn to the rails of Tattersall's Ring.

Mr. Dick Dodd was standing by the narrow entrance gate which opens into the Members' Enclosure. He had paid the few customers who had had the judgment or good fortune to back Phantom City, and it was evident that he had had a good race, and was on very good terms with himself.

Dash approached him with his ticket in his hand.

"How much?" asked the bookmaker, taking the ticket.

"A hundred and five pounds, please," answered Dash.

"A hundred and five of the best, 838," he chanted, and the burly clerk who stood, book in hand, beside him, answered "Right."

Dick drew a huge bundle of notes from the interior of his waistcoat and counted out the money, which he handed to Dash.

"And thank you," he said. "It is quite a plea-

sure to pay over such a good horse. A beautiful horse he is, and a beauty for my book," and he burst once more into song to the tune of the Mistle-toe Bough.

"Oh, he's a beautiful horse! Oh, he's a beautiful horse!" as he stuffed the remainder of his roll of notes back into the place from whence they came.

Dash laughed and thanked him, and then, thrusting his wad of paper into his trouser-pocket, he turned and joined Walter Nuthall once more.

"We will have a walk down the rails, beginning at the top, and I will introduce you to some of the leading men," said Walter. "That little man with the hard-bitten face is Charley Bibury. He is a big bookmaker, and he owns a good many platers. He is also a great coursing man. You ought to know him."

So saying, Mr. Nuthall approached the knight of the pencil and whispered a few words in his ear: then turning to Dash, he said,

"This is Mr. Dashwood Fynes, who is taking to racing; I want you to treat him well in the matter of prices if he comes to have a bet with you."

"Delighted, I am sure, Mr. Fynes; I don't think my prices are any shorter than other people's; and at any rate, I shall be pleased to lay you the best odds in the market."

"Mr. Fynes has just had a good win over the

Jubilee. I put a hundred on the winner for him at twenty-to-one."

"Two thousand pounds!" exclaimed Mr. Bibury, "and you say Mr. Fynes is only beginning racing! If he does that sort of thing in the green wood, what will he do in the dry? I shall have to be careful—you must not be too hard on me, Mr. Fynes!" and Mr. Bibury laughed pleasantly.

"I don't expect such a stroke of luck as that again in a hurry," replied Dash; "but I mean to go racing a little this summer, and hope to have some bets with you."

"Give the Two Thou a chance?" inquired Charley Bibury. "Well, when you are going to shed some of it, come to me. When you have got another Phantom City, please go lower down!" and he swept his hand in the direction of the line of book-makers.

Things were very quiet just then, after the excitement of the Jubilee and the objection that followed; and as the numbers had not yet gone up for the next race, the ring men were talking and comparing notes together, and those who were near Mr. Bibury overheard the conversation and passed it on along the rank, so that Dash, being pointed out as the winner of such a nice stake, quickly became an object of interest.

"Now I will introduce you to little Emanuel; they call him 'the polished gentleman' in the

ring ; when he removes his hat, you will see why."

"Mr. Emanuel, I want to introduce a new customer—Mr. Dashwood Fynes—he may occasionally want a bet with you."

"Charmed to make your acquaintance, sir!" said Mr. Emanuel, at the same time raising his hat and showing a perfectly bald and very shiny skull. "I hope we may have some business together."

Dash said he hoped so, and could not help smiling as he thought of the glossy lustre of the head, which had originated Mr. Emanuel's nick-name ; and they passed along the rails.

"The next is old Daniels," remarked Walter, alluding to a bright-eyed old gentleman with a grey beard and gold-rimmed spectacles, who looked like the President of the French Republic ; and another introduction was effected.

"And this is Drewitt, he is a good man too ; and then old Ben Spooner, one of our cheeriest, always telling funny stories and ready to lay you the odds to any amount. He has some horses in training, and gets awfully excited if one of them wins a race."

"Then comes Abinger—he is a very good billiard player ; and he has a starting-price office in town as well."

Dash received a courtly bow from Mr. Abinger, which he returned with equal politeness, to the

amusement of the ring ; for Abinger was celebrated for the old-world dignity of his bearing, and it always delighted the less ceremonious members of Tattersall's to see the wide and graceful sweep of his hat as he raised it with the courtesy of a noble of gallant Spain.

"But talking of starting price," resumed Walter, "you ought to know Joe Thackeray. He has the biggest S.P. business in England, and he makes a very big book in the ring, as well. There he is, with the short light beard.

"The next is Bob Hopping—he has an S.P. business too ; and down at the end, that fat chap with the big mouth is Alec Henry. Dick Dodd christened him 'Widemouth Bay,' and the name has stuck to him. He bets either ready or on the nod ; and he will sometimes give you a shower-bath as well, if you are not careful, for he splutters like a whale spouting."

To all these and many more Dash was presented with due ceremony, and then Walter Nuthall began to think it was time to return to the paddock.

"I think I have put you in a fair way to break the ring now, Mr. Fynes," he said ; "and I must just run round to the paddock for a minute."

"I will come too," said Dash, and they went their way together ; Nuthall to attend to his business, and Dash to find Delia.

In the meantime, let us return to Hamilton

Rolfe. When he heard the sentence of disqualification, he left the weighing-room in a very bad temper, as we have seen, but he soon reflected that cursing would not help him, and that he must back a winner. In this mood he wandered about the paddock to gather information from his many acquaintances, and, gazing in at the open door of one of the boxes in which a horse was receiving the finishing touches, he came across Bertie Fraser.

That interesting youth had recovered from the debility of the morning. Had had fifty on Phantom City, for luck ; and was as full of beans as he could hold.

"Hello, Rolfe, old man!" he cried, "I hope you got your money back over Helvellyn's stable companion—you see I knew something when I laid you those bets!"

"No," said Rolfe. "I've had a very bad day, and I am looking for something to get out on."

"Well, I can tell you the winner in once," went on Fraser, with the confidence of ignorance. "Prospero is sure to win. I saw him taken in there to be saddled. Gatling rides him, and it's a moral cert."

"Have you got the tip from anyone who knows?" asked Rolfe.

"Never you mind where I get my information!" cried Bertie. "I know, and that's enough."

All that Bertie really knew was that he had

seen a horse with a very shining coat led into the box in question. That he had asked its name and been told that it was Prospero, and that Gatling, in the colours, had gone into the box. But Fraser was in luck, and felt that curious confidence which one sees so often in persons who are not accustomed to racing, and which seems to approach almost to inspiration, so often is it justified in the result.

"Prospero, is it? Well, thanks; I shall back him," and Rolfe went back to the ring, where he found the horse stood at five to one, and he was on the point of taking a bet when he met Charlie Hills, the professional backer.

"What are you backing, Charlie?" Rolfe asked, and Hills turned his card towards him with his thumb indicating Holdfast, who was favourite, at five to two.

Rolfe weighed the chances in his mind, and decided that Hills was more likely to be right than a young ass like Bertie Fraser, so he altered his intention and supported Holdfast.

It is almost needless to say that Prospero won, and Holdfast was not even placed; so certain is it that a man out of luck cannot do right, and one in luck can't do wrong.

Dash had found Delia, and the two walked together in the paddock in a dream of delicious imagining.

"Now that we have taken the first step," said

Delia, "the next thing is to make a plan for the future. I think we had better find John Straight and have a talk to him."

"So do I," replied Dash; "I want to know whether there is any meeting next week that he thinks we ought to operate at. Mr. Nuthall has introduced me to all the bookmakers, and I can go into the ring and bet on my own behalf now, and Nuthall will pay and receive for me. Does it not sound fine?"

"Yes, dear; and now I think you must begin to tame those bookmakers, so that when we want to bet a lot they shall think nothing of it. We will miss the next race, so as to see John Straight; come along, there he is."

John Straight came forward, carrying a leather case; he was making for the back of the stand, where he had a fly waiting to drive him to Walton Station.

"Oh, Mr. Straight," cried Delia, "this is splendid! Now what do you think of Samoa's chance for the Derby?"

"Well, Miss Delia, the running to-day makes him have a pretty good chance; but I am very sorry to have to hurry off. I catch an express at Walton which will get me back at half-past seven—if I miss it I shall not get home till one o'clock in the morning, so I am sure you will excuse me. But I should like Mr. Fynes to come down to Cot-

tington next week and have a look at Samoa and the two-year-olds ; and then, as he is going on the turf, I may be able to help him a little."

"Nothing I should like better ! What day shall I come ? " asked Dash, joyfully.

"Friday afternoon—I shall have a quiet day on Saturday, and I will send to meet you at Belstone at 6.45. You will come by the 5.5 from Waterloo, if that suits you ? "

"Admirably. I shall love it ! " cried Dash.

"Very well. Good-bye, Miss Delia ; good-bye, young man ! " and the brave old fellow hurried away.

"That seems to me about as good a move as we could have made," said Dash. "I love the stables and everything to do with the training grounds, and it will seem like old times to be down at Cottington again."

"And remember that you may be able to pick up a good deal of useful knowledge from old Straight. He has evidently taken an interest in our scheme, and what he tells us will be worth knowing. I shall ride over on Saturday morning and join you on the downs. It will be great fun."

As they passed the number board they saw that Prospero had won, and they heard someone remark that not a single favourite had been successful that day.

"If we acted on the theory of chances," said

Dash, "we should back the favourite for the next race ; I suppose it is about time for a first favourite to win."

"Dash !" said Delia, impressively, "that is the true instinct ! We *will* back the favourite next time ; I told you we must tame the bookmakers, and now is the time to do it. Don't listen to anyone, but when the numbers go up, go into the ring and put a hundred on with two bookmakers—that will make two hundred—on whatever you find is first favourite."

"Right !" exclaimed Dash, "I will go and smite them, hip and thigh !"

They wandered on to the lawn, and then Delia joined Mrs. Baines to have some tea, whilst Dash went to the rails and listened to the opening of the betting.

Very soon he found that Sparklet was a firm favourite at two to one, so he went to Charley Bibury and took two hundred to one from him, and the same from Ben Spooner, and retired to the members' stand to see the race, with Delia.

It was a two-year-old selling race, and after a splendid finish up the straight course, Sparklet managed to shake off the attentions of his nearest rival and win by a neck from a big field.

"That will do for to-day," said Dash exultingly, in Delia's ear. "Now we will wait till I have been to Cottington before we have any more bets."

"Very well—let us go and see the winner sold ! Mrs. Baines, will you come and see him sold ? "

Mrs. Baines agreed, and they went to the sale ring and saw Sparklet bought in for four hundred and thirty guineas.

"Pretty creature !" exclaimed Mrs. Baines, as the horse was led away. "I wish I had had something on it."

While they were standing there they were joined by Lord Thistleton and Sir Robert.

"If you are ready to start," said Lord Thistleton, "I think we had better collect our party and go to the coach, so as to get away before the road is blocked up by costers' carts ; the last race is only a match between two moderate platers, and not a fitting wind-up to the splendid sport we have had."

The ladies concurred, and Dash went off to find the Felton girls, who had gone down the course with a couple of young undergraduate friends, to look at the crowd and to try to see a welsher colared. He soon descried them on the outskirts of a crowd where a tipster was declaiming in a loud voice about his successes and the infallibility of his information. He noticed that two or three rough-looking men were pushing their way between the girls and their escort, and then a little unshaved blackguard in a faded cut-away coat and dirty white waistcoat disengaged himself from the throng and ran up the course in the direction of Dash.

"That man has snatched my diamond brooch!" screamed Doris Felton, pointing to the disappearing little man.

The two undergrads turned and tried to give chase, but they found that the man's confederates had hemmed them in on all sides, and they could not break through.

"She never 'ad no di'mond brooch!" shouted one of the hustlers; and the others took up the cry.

"Stop thief! stop thief!" roared the undergraduates to Dash, but he appeared not to hear them and walked serenely in their direction.

The thief, thinking that Dash was taking no interest in the proceedings, ran right past him, and Dash, adroitly putting out his leg, managed to trip him up and to fall on him before he was aware of his danger.

"Give me the brooch, or I'll wring your neck!" he whispered fiercely, grasping the little man's throat in his strong fingers, and giving it a warning squeeze.

The abstractor of the brooch saw that the game was up, so he meekly handed the booty to Dash, who then arose and did not attempt to detain him.

Police, both mounted and on foot, dashed upon the scene, but it all happened so quickly that the little thief had had time to pick himself up and make good his escape before they got up to him.

Dash put the brooch into his pocket and strolled

up to the girls as if nothing had happened, and the crowd, urged by the police, very quickly dispersed.

"Come along," he said; "Lord Thistleton wants to leave before the last race, and sent me to look for you."

"A jolly good thing he did!" said Dick Barber, one of the undergraduates, "we could do nothing—those great fat brutes had closed round us so that we were not able to move!"

"I don't know how to thank you," murmured Lady Doris; "you did it splendidly."

"Well, that's all right; now let us hurry up. I will give you your brooch when we get to the drag," answered Dash, anxious to get the girls safely out of the crowd; and they soon joined their party, where Lady Doris proudly recounted her adventure.

"Rolfe is not going back with us," said Lord Thistleton; "he says he wants to see the last race, and will go home by train."

"I am extremely glad to hear it!" said Sir Peter Stokes, who had accepted a seat for the return journey. "I did not like the way he took Phantom City's win at all. Of course, a man has a right to back what he likes, but he has no right to be unpleasant when he loses."

"Here are the horses," said Lord Thistleton; "put-to as quickly as you can, Martin."

The grooms soon had them in, and the coach started merrily on its way to London.

CHAPTER XIII.

COTTINGTON.

THE settlement on Monday was naturally a heavy one, after a week which had included two such important meetings as Chester and Kempton Park ; but, as the sporting papers announced the next morning, it passed off without a hitch, and Dash received a letter from Mr. Walter Nuthall enclosing a cheque for £2,825, which he lost no time in paying into his banking account.

Hamilton Rolfe had come to an arrangement with Bertie Fraser whereby that accommodating youth agreed to accept a bill at six months in lieu of cash, and of course he had paid the ring in full, for he could not afford to let his credit suffer ; and besides, apart from what he had lost to Fraser, he had not had such a very bad time.

The Ashingdons returned to Belstone on Tuesday, Delia and Dash having had frequent opportunities of enjoying each other's society during their stay in London ; and then Dash had resumed his attendance at chambers and the usual grind

of drawing pleadings and devilling for someone else, which, no doubt, is a very intellectual way of spending one's time, but is not immediately remunerative.

The week dragged slowly on, and Friday afternoon saw Dashwood Fynes drive in a hansom to Waterloo and take his place in the corner of a comfortable smoking carriage bound for Belstone.

He was in high spirits, and found the journey through the fresh spring verdure, lit by the afternoon sun, most enjoyable.

At Belstone Dash found a stylish dog-cart drawn by a blood-like grey cob awaiting him. A neat groom stood at the horse's head, and touched his hat as Dash came out of the station.

"From Mr. Straight?" asked Dash.

"Yessir," replied the groom.

"The porter is bringing my bag. I shall not be a minute," said Dash.

The porter came out carrying the bag and placed it in the back of the cart, and Dash gave him the customary gratuity.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the groom, "but will you drive, or shall I?"

"Oh, I should like to drive," replied Dash, taking the reins and climbing to his seat.

The cob arched his neck and sprang forward, and the little groom jumped agilely up behind.

"By Jingo!" cried Dash, as the cob flew through the street of Belstone, "this is a grand mover!"

"Yes, sir; there's not a one as can touch him in this part of the country, either for pace or action," replied the groom proudly.

The cob was hogmaned and short docked, and he stepped like machinery. It was a real pleasure to drive him. He went very free, without pulling, and in a few minutes they were in the open country, flying by hedges and plantations, past farm-houses and cottages, up and down the little hills which lead by gradually-ascending undulations to the back of the ridge of downs which intersects the country, and furnishes so many celebrated training grounds; then down one long steep hill with a deep chalk pit on one side and a wood of beeches on the other, and round a sharp corner by Wellesley Park, and then, a mile or so ahead, the village of Cottington came into view.

They rattled through the village street, where a group of labourers assembled on the grass plot in front of the Chequers stood pot in hand, and gazed at the smart cart as it whirled by them, and tardily raised their hands to their caps in salutation.

Past Luck's, the general dealer, whose name, displayed in large letters, struck Dash as a word of good augury; round to the left again, by Sand-

ford, the butcher's, and the crazy old post-office, from which so many epoch-making telegrams had emanated, and the Swan Hotel with its old-fashioned whitewashed front embedded in creepers; past the little gas works; over a rickety bridge which spanned a little brook famous for its trout and its cresses, onward to where, nestling under the shadow of the great green downs, the red-tiled roofs of Mr. John Straight's training stables blazed in the glory of the setting sun.

There was a white swing-gate and a short gravel sweep up to the house, and Dash noticed that everything in the garden was in faultless order, and then they pulled up at the door, where John, who had heard the rhythmical step of the gallant grey, had come out to welcome his guest.

"How are you?" he asked. "I am glad to see you."

"Oh, I am glad to come back here!" cried Dash, as he pressed the veteran trainer's hand. "It seems such a long time since I used to come over from school to see you, but the place has not changed much, except that the garden looks, if possible, more spick-and-span than ever."

"Ah, I like to have things in their proper places," returned John Straight, as he trod a stone, which had been knocked up by the cob, back into its place in the gravel.

"But come in! You must have something after

your drive. Sherry and bitters or vermouth, or would you like a little whiskey and soda ? ”

“ I should like a little vermouth, with a couple of drops of bitters in it, please, if I may have it,” answered Dash.

“ Certainly, come this way,” and John led the way into his office, as he called a delightful little room, furnished with inviting arm-chairs, and with the walls covered with small paintings and photographs of celebrated horses which at different times had fought and won for the glory of Cottingham. A big English roll-top desk stood by the window, which looked out upon the stable-yard and the rows of red-brick boxes ; a bookcase filled with racing calendars and other volumes of turf lore occupied the walls on the left, and on the opposite side were other shelves containing histories, books of travel, a Shakespeare, Sir Walter Scott’s novels, a few books of poetry, and a great number on the subject of agriculture and gardening.

There was a nest of iron boxes, such as one usually sees in a lawyer’s office, in one corner, and a safe in another : a cheerful fire glowed in the grate, for though it was the middle of May, old John liked the company of a fire of an evening, and incandescent gas lamps shed their white light upon the surroundings.

The trainer touched the electric bell, and it was immediately answered by a handsome, rosy-cheeked

parlourmaid, with a figure like the Venus of Milo ; except that she, unlike that strapping goddess, was blessed with a pair of shapely and very serviceable arms.

"The vermouth and angostura, and some glasses, Bertha," ordered the old man, and the girl quickly brought them and set them on the table.

John poured out the vermouth and shook a drop or two of the bitters into it, and handing a glass to Dash, took another himself, saying,

"Well, here's a hearty welcome to you."

"Many thanks," said Dash. "Ah! that's good!"

"All the family are away," remarked John, "and I had thought to have you all to myself, but I got a wire this morning from Tom Gatling, saying that he was coming over to stay the night, and he will be here at dinner."

"I shall be delighted to see him again," replied Dash; "I don't suppose he will remember me, but I met him here once or twice in the old days, when he used to come over to ride trials."

"Ah, yes," said the trainer; "he used to come here very often then, but he has given up riding altogether for some time. His boys do all the riding now: young Tom is a trainer with a long string of useful horses, and Leicester and Sandown are at the top of the tree as jockeys. I think Leicester is the finest jockey we have: he has his

father's delicate hands and fine judgment of pace, combined with poor Fred Archer's daring and determination—but he never cuts a horse about, and I would rather have him ride my two-year-olds than anyone I know."

"When will Gatling get here?" asked Dash, much interested.

"I expect him at any moment; dinner is at eight, and he is sure to be in plenty of time for that, but if you would like to see your room I will show it to you."

Dash followed Mr. Straight upstairs, and was shown into a pretty bed-room with windows looking out over wide fields of young wheat which stretched away to the foot of the downs.

His portmanteau had been unpacked, and his dress-clothes were ready laid out for him. He was glad of this, for he was not sure whether Mr. Straight was in the habit of dressing for dinner or not, and this seemed to furnish the necessary information.

At that moment he heard a fly drive up to the door, and was aware that Mr. Tom Gatling had arrived.

He quickly put on his evening clothes, with a black tie and a smoking jacket, and found his way to the drawing-room, where, being first down, he had leisure to inspect the furniture and ornaments.

There were choice works of art all about the room, arranged with great taste.

Sèvres vases, silver cups, rare inlaid tables, beautiful water-colour paintings; they were the gifts of winning owners and other admirers, collected during a career of well over half a century. There were photographs of great men, distinguished on the turf and in the senate, costily framed, and with the autographs of their originals upon them. There were great bowls of flowers, diffusing a fragrance around, and amongst other things, a grand piano and harp, which showed that when the trainer's daughters were at home music was not lacking.

John Straight soon joined his guest, and shortly afterwards Mr. Tom Gatling made his appearance, and was introduced to Dash.

Tom did not look a day over forty, but in reality much water had flowed beneath the bridges since he had passed that comfortable age. Very thin and spare, with clear blue eyes and a sharp, dominant Roman nose, fair silky hair, whose curls showed a few streaks of greyness, small whiskers, and a firm mouth and strong chin, Tom Gatling still looked fit to go anywhere and to do anything. He was the embodiment of neatness and elegance. His clothes fitted him to perfection, and there was just that suspicion of dandyism which falls short of being offensive, but gives its possessor an air of distinction.

"I am pleased to meet you again, sir," said the jockey.

"I am charmed to have an opportunity of renewing our acquaintance," said Dash. "I was telling Mr. Straight that I expected you would have forgotten me, as I was only a boy when I used to see you here."

"I never forget a face," replied Tom, "and what's more, you gave us some things to remember you by. Don't you recollect the time when you went out with some of the lads and my bull-terrier, which you borrowed without leave, and went badger-hunting in Grassford big wood? You came back with your hands all bitten and your face and clothes all over blood and dirt, but you had three badgers in a bag! As for poor old Tatters, he looked more like a job lot of giblets than a dog!"

"Oh, yes! but the reason of that was that Tatters got into the bag with the badgers in the cart on the way home, and we had a dreadful job to separate them."

"Well, poor old Tatters is dead and gone now; but I have got some of his stock yet."

"Ah," said Dash, "he was a rare dog—the gamest I ever saw!"

The sound of a peal of softly-modulated gongs fell upon the ear.

"Come along," cried John Straight, "that is the dinner."

They followed John to the dining-room, and sat down to table.

The buxom parlourmaid removed the cover from the tureen, and John ladled out copious helpings of ox-tail soup.

This was followed by fried soles, a saddle of four-year-old Down mutton, and numerous pies and puddings.

"What do you think of this champagne, Tom? It was a present from the Duc de Clichy when I helped him choose some horses to send over to France."

It was delicious, and Tom said so.

"I thought you would like it," said the old man. "One advantage of being a trainer is that people give you the best of everything."

After an anchovy toast, the maid cleared the table and removed the cloth, and then placed wine and dessert upon the polished mahogany.

There was a ring at the bell, and Bertha announced Mr. Player.

Sam put his head into the room and then stopped, saying,

"I beg pardon, I did not know you had company!"

"Come in, Sam!" cried John Straight, "here's Tom Gatling and Mr. Dashwood Fynes; they will be very pleased to see you."

Thus invited, Sam entered and took a place at the table.

"I thought I would just stroll round and have

a smoke with you, as I understood you were alone," said Sam.

"Glad to see you, Sam. Port or claret?"

"Claret, please; I dare not drink port," replied Sam, as he helped himself.

Dash and Tom Gatling took port, and so did the old trainer.

"This port is '68," said John, "I laid it down the year that I won the Grand Prize of Paris with the Wanderer, and you rode him, Tom."

"Ah," said Tom, looking regretfully at one of the large oil paintings which hung on the wall, wherein was depicted the great muscular horse standing on a race-course, with Tom himself, in the black and cherry, astride him, looking ridiculously tiny, and old John, then in the prime of life, standing at his head. "Ah, how the time flies! I shall never forget that day, and the night that followed it!"

"Remember that supper party?" asked John.

"That supper! I should think I did!" then, turning to Dash and Sam, who looked expectantly at him, "Mr. Straight gave a supper in honour of the Wanderer that night—it was in a private room at a restaurant in Paris, and twelve of us sat down. We were a jolly party, and all full of money. There was old George Bridger, and Teddy Hopkins, and little Vixtable (Gold Tooth, we called him, because he had more gold stopping than teeth in his mouth),

and Jim Abel, and Waterworks, and 'The Honest and Manly,' and a lot of others, including poor Doctor Rochester, who used to live down here.

"Well, we were getting on splendidly, and everyone was in a good temper, when a beastly Frenchman, with his hair cut like a dandy brush, and a waxed moustache, came and pulled up a chair next to me and sat down just as if he were one of the party.

"I looked at him with a sort of reproving touch, and he came close to me, and putting his hand on my shoulder, whispered something in my ear, in French.

"I could not understand what he said, but I crooked my left elbow and put it against his ribs, and then I brought down my right hand on my fist and drove the elbow bang home on to his liver—Lor! it fairly made him sigh again!

"Then he jumped up and holloaed 'Sacray tonnare!' and made a rush at me.

"I hit him in the eye and he got under the table. Then he put his ugly head out and showed a revolver, which he pointed at me. I jumped on to the table, and Jim Abel and the doctor got hold of his legs from the other side and began to drag him out. When he came out, Mr. Straight, here, jumped on his hand and hurt it, so that he dropped the revolver, and Harry Vixtable snatched it. Then they took him to the top of the stairs and

held him by the hands and feet and gave him a swing. It was a wide, straight staircase, and the noise attracted a lot of people from the public supper-room down below, so when half-a-dozen Frenchmen began to rush up the stairs, our fellows gave the chap an extra swing and let him go, so that he landed in the middle of them, and they all went to the bottom in a heap.

"There was an awful row then, and the police came, but it turned out that our visitor was a well-known pickpocket, so they thought we were rather heroes, and they let us finish our supper in peace."

"Ah," sighed John Straight, "that was thirty years or more ago! Before you were born, Mr. Fynes; most of our party are under the daisies now! I wonder whether they ever think about racing? Poor old Doctor Rochester was simply mad about it—he was as fine a sportsman as ever lived, when he was with his gun and his pointers, but on a race-course he was a mere baby! Still, if his ghost could walk, he would go to Epsom to see Samoa run!"

"Talking of ghosts," said Sam Player, "did you hear what they did to Beale, the tipster—you know, Whispers—at the Craven Meeting? They were talking about ghosts in the billiard-room at the Hartland, and someone said, pointing to Beale, 'That chap has to cross the churchyard on the

way to his lodgings.' 'All right,' says Vic Withers, the rival tout, 'I'll give him a fright to-night!' Well, Whispers is not very easily frightened, so some of them betted Withers a fiver he could not frighten Beale. Vic went away to get ready, and left some of his pals to talk about ghosts to Beale till closing time, which they did.

"In the meantime, Vic Withers went home and got his nightshirt, and went into the cemetery to wait for Whispers.

"Whispers says good-night, and starts off home alone, but he had a big stick. All the other chaps followed on tip-toe, to see the fun.

"It was a very dark night, and Whispers walked boldly into the grave-yard, and when he got to the middle, there, on a tombstone stood a great tall figure in white—you know what a lanky chap Vic is—waving his arms about. Whispers took no notice, so Vic went down on his hands and knees in the path and began scratching up the gravel with his fingers, and making a horrid screeching noise like an owl. Whispers walked up to him and brought his big stick down on his rump, a regular plugger, saying, 'Get inside, you beggar, you've got no business out here!'

"Vic jumped up and ran for his life, and Whispers just turned round to the fellows, who were roaring with laughter, and said, 'Well, gentlemen, I think you've won your fiver; good-night!'

How he got to know that it was a put-up thing, and that they were betting on it, they never found out, but not much escapes Mr. Whispers' ears, or eyes either ! ”

“ Bravo ! ” cried Tom, “ not so bad for a ‘ country horse ; ’ they don’t have it all their own way at Newmarket, after all ! ”

When the laughter had subsided, John got up and went to a cupboard, from which he produced a box of large cigars, which he placed on the table, inviting his guests to help themselves.

Tom Gatling and Dash lighted up accordingly, and proceeded to puff away, but neither Sam Player nor Mr. Straight smoked.

“ That Mr. Beale, or ‘ Whispers, ’ as they call him, seems to be getting quite a string of horses at Dick Jodrell’s,” remarked Tom, as the smoke from his Rothschild curled upwards, spreading a delicious aroma. “ I see that he sent another there the other day ; a three-year-old filly by Peasant out of Fortuna. I never heard of her before.”

Dash started as he heard the name, but old John never moved a muscle.

“ Tip-mongering must be a profitable trade,” said Sam.

“ Yes,” replied John drily ; “ but I happen to know something about this filly which I think may disqualify her if she runs. She don’t belong

to Beale at all, but to Hamilton Rolfe, the pigeon sharp."

"How did you find that out?" asked Tom; "it is worth knowing! But fancy a man in Mr. Rolfe's position, passing as he does as a gentleman, getting mixed up in such things."

"How I know is that I saw the filly sold," said John. "I went to buy her for Sir Robert Ashingdon on the night before the Jubilee, and this Mr. Rolfe was beforehand with me." And then he told the story of the dinner, and how Rolfe had forestalled him, amidst expressions of disgust from his hearers.

"Well," remarked Sam Player, "we must think of a plan to get even with him. They don't keep their horses doing nothing very long in Jodrell's stable, so I should think as soon as they have got this filly broken they will have her out for an airing. If they happen to put her in a selling-race, thinking nobody will claim her, you may get your chance."

"If I happen to be there, and to have a horse running in the same race, I should certainly exercise my right of claiming," said John; "but how am I to know where they will enter her?"

"I know!" cried Sam; "I have a brother living at Epsom, and he knows all about Dick Jodrell's horses. I will get him to let me know when and where they are going to enter this filly, and if it

is a selling-race, you might put in something of your own to give you a claim if she gets beaten—of course, if she wins you can object on the ground of ownership.”

“As you know, Sam, it is not in my line to follow a man up because I know something which will injure him, but in this instance, this Rolfe behaved in such a blackguardly way that I will show him no mercy. But if I get the opportunity of claiming this filly, will you let me buy her for you, Mr. Fynes?”

“I should like to buy her very much, if you will train her for me,” said Dash.

“No, I am afraid that I cannot train her for you myself, but I can put you into a little stable belonging to a friend of mine, Joe Tritton, at Pole-down, where you will be fairly treated.”

“Very well,” answered Dash, “I shall be delighted to buy the mare if you can get her, and I am very much obliged to you for proposing it.”

“I really think you might pick up a good handicap with her if she’s half as good as she looks; that is why I recommend her,” said John. “Of course, we may never get a chance to buy her, but if we do, I shall have her for you!”

The conversation continued to be about horses and races—the American style of riding, the starting gate, and other topics which exercise the

mind of the racing man—until, at eleven, Sam Player said “Good-night,” and departed on foot for his home, which was only half a mile distant ; and the others very soon took their candles and went to bed, John having warned Dash that he would be expected to be up at half-past six in the morning,

CHAPTER XIV.

BY THE OLD RUBBING-HOUSE.

THE May morning broke fair and lovely over the red roofs of Cottington: a thin white mist hung over the low country and ran up the indented steepes of the downs like the waves of a slow-rolling sea, and the green hills themselves, with their alternate lights and shadows, flashed out in the sunlight above the tide of vapour like gigantic rocks of emerald.

Dashwood Fynes leaped joyously from his bed, and, after a shave and a shower-bath, he made his way downstairs, gaitered and thick-booted, and found John Straight and Tom Gatling in the office. Tom was drinking a glass of milk and nibbling a biscuit, but there was hot coffee on the table as well, and Dash elected to drink the latter beverage.

After the usual morning greetings, John led the way to the stable-yard, where a governess-car was awaiting them, drawn by a grey pony, but not the same that Dash had driven from Belstone. This

pony was altogether smaller, and could not be described as handsome, but she looked, and was, as clever as a cat, and just what was wanted for the downs.

"Now then," said John, "jump in; the horses have been gone half-an-hour."

Dash and Tom sat on the left-side seat, and John drove from the right, and the grey pony spun along the chalky road towards the training-ground in merry style.

Presently the road began to ascend the downs in a semi-circular slope, skirting a deep valley, which looked as if it had been clean bitten out of the side of the hill by some fabulous monster of antiquity. Numbers of rabbits scudded about its steep sides or sat complacently on the heaps of earth and stones in front of their burrows.

"By Jingo!" cried Dash, "I should like to have the ferreting of that valley. Do they let it?"

"Oh, yes," replied John; "it is let every year, but never two years to the same man."

"How is that?" asked Dash.

"Well, the tenants of the shooting are generally gentlemen from London, who want a bit of sport, and don't care to go to the price of pheasant coverts, so they see an advertisement of this warren, and they come down to have a look, and are shown about a thousand rabbits sitting out all round like that. They gladly pay thirty or forty pounds for

the shooting, but when they come down to have a day, they find that the first shot drives all the rabbits to ground, for the sound of a gun reverberates round that valley like thunder, and seems to get louder as it travels."

"Well," said Dash, "but can't they ferret them?"

"No, that is just it. I knew a young fellow who took the shooting one year, and he asked me to join the party on the first day. There were eleven guns and eighteen ferrets, and the guns were all good shots, but what do you think was the extent of the bag? Twenty-one rabbits. We could not get them to bolt; for those burrows are very likely a thousand years old, and they go right down into the rock in galleries, like a honeycomb. The rabbits we got were mostly silly chaps who had lain out under a heap of faggots, and we lost nine or ten of the ferrets, although most of them were line ones!"

John pulled up the pony at a very steep place, and suggested that they should walk up that part, which they did; and then, rising over the brow of the hill, they saw the heads of a row of stable-boys, and soon the racers came into view.

The two-year-olds were walking round and round in a large circle, and a string of nine or ten others were making their way down a gradual decline to the left. John turned the car on to the soft springy grass, and our three friends resumed their places.

"We shall get to the bushes in time to see these horses canter," said John, and the pony scudded over the downs to the patch of furze bushes, which was the trainer's favourite coign of vantage.

"That is the old rubbing-house," said John, pointing to a dilapidated-looking shanty. "We never use it now, for we wait till we get back to stables to do our rubbing."

A horse was seen galloping over the downs from the direction of Oakwood, and Dash exclaimed—

"Here comes Miss Ashingdon! will she be in time to see the horses pass?"

"Oh, yes," said John; "they won't start till I give the signal, and we will wait for Miss Ashingdon."

In a couple of minutes Delia had reined up her bay mare at their side, and was shaking hands with John.

"How do you do, Mr. Gatling?" she asked. "How are you, Dash?"

She looked sweeter than ever in her neat grey habit and soft felt hat, her cheeks glowing with the flush of health and exercise, and her bright eyes brimming with the joy of life.

"Now we'll have them," said John, as he waved his hat in the air.

No sooner had he signalled than, one by one, the first six of the string of old horses turned and cantered towards where he was stationed. Nearer

and nearer they came, and flashed by at what seemed to Dash, who was not accustomed to see horses at exercise, to be a very high rate of speed, their sheets whistling in the wind. John named each horse as it passed them.

"Balham, Cicely, La Carmagnole, Beanstalk, Agulhas, Stiletto. Agulhas is going well to-day," he added.

Delia's mare showed a desire to join in, but her mistress patted her neck and spoke to her, and she quieted down.

"Where is Helvellyn, Mr. Straight?" asked Delia presently.

"Oh, he is trotting about by himself; I expect to gallop him again gently in a day or two—you must look out for him at Ascot."

"Is that only what you call a canter?" asked Dash. "I should like to see how they go when they gallop, for those horses seemed to me to be going faster than they do on race-courses."

"Ah, yes; that is always the case," replied Tom; "you see, when they are going one-by-one as they do at exercise, it is like a train passing through a station—you always think it goes faster than it does."

"You shall see horses gallop directly," remarked John. "I am going to gallop Samoa with Phantom City and Euphrates. There they are, at the mile post; the head lad will start them."

In the distance the three horses could be seen, walking about in the neighbourhood of the white post which served to mark the starting-point of the mile gallop. Teddy Buckle, the head lad, stood by the post, ready to despatch them when they should get into line.

"Euphrates is to set a pace for them," said John. "He cannot get more than five furlongs, but he can do that pretty well. I told the boy to keep his coat on, but the other two will take their jackets off, so that you may be able to distinguish them. Samoa's lad has red flannel shirt-sleeves, and Phantom City's grey ones.

The horses had now lined up, and Teddy Buckle stood forward.

There was the flash of a white handkerchief waved suddenly, and they were started.

Euphrates, in accordance with his pace-making mission, rushed to the front and brought them along at a terrific pace.

The Phantom lay two or three lengths behind him, with Samoa close up.

So they came for half a mile, when the three-year-old began to draw level with Phantom City, and both were gaining on the leader. In another two hundred yards they had passed Euphrates, and the latter, having done all that was required of him, was eased up and cantered slowly in the rear. Then the rider of Phantom City was seen

to be riding with his hands, to get out of the way of Samoa ; but Sam Player, on the latter, had not moved. Six furlongs—seven, and Samoa still swept along at the quarters of the Phantom, who was doing all he knew to keep his place. Then Sam let his horse go, and in a dozen strides he had given the older horse the go-by, and came on alone, thundering over the yielding turf, a good four lengths in front as he flashed by the bushes, with his ears pricked and looking as if he would like to go on for ever.

“What a grand sight !” exclaimed Dash. “I would much rather see a trial on the downs than a race !”

Delia agreed, but old John said nothing, and he walked quietly forward to meet the horses as they returned.

“You’ve got a Derby horse there, Miss Ashington,” remarked Tom Gatling ; “or I never saw one !”

“Oh, isn’t he a dear ?” cried Delia. “How I long for Epsom !” and she stroked the neck of her bay mare lovingly.

John Straight rejoined the party, his face wreathed in a broad smile.

“Will that be good enough to bet on, Tom ?” he asked ; “the young ’un was giving five pounds.”

“Yes,” replied Tom, “I think that will about hit the mark.”

"Now for the two-year-olds," said John ; "they are just going to canter."

The circle of horses was broken up, and the two-year-olds came streaming over the down in single file, led by The Huntsman, a chestnut six-year-old, who had in his time won many races, but was now employed as preceptor to the rising generation, with an occasional visit to a race-course to earn his winter keep. They were a promising lot as they bounded along, but few of them had yet sported silk, and the majority had not even been tried, for John was not in favour of early racing for the juveniles.

"Now we will get home to breakfast!" cried John, cheerily. "Miss Ashingdon, will you honour us by joining, and then I will find a mount for Mr. Fynes, and he can ride back to Oakwood with you after you have had a rest."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Straight ; I don't so much want a rest, but I do want some breakfast, and I shall be very glad to go down to the house."

"Very well, then," said John, "away we go ;" and the three men took their places in the little pony cart and trotted over the downs, while Delia cantered by the side.

When they reached Teddy Buckle, John pulled up for a moment to give him some instructions, and then they pursued their way down the steep

hill and back to the hospitality of Cottington, and were soon seated around the breakfast-table.

There were freshly-caught brook trout, fried to a turn, and kidneys and bacon, and eggs; a big York ham stood on the sideboard, and there was a large dish of strawberries, forced on the premises. Delia poured out tea and coffee, and all set-to with appetites which did full justice to the fare.

Tom Gatling told a host of amusing anecdotes, for he was at his best in the society of ladies; John beamed with good humour at the success of Samoa's trial; and Delia and Dash were brimming over with excitement and happiness.

After breakfast John took them round to look at the stables, kept with such neatness that they would have been the envy and despair of the most exacting housewife, with the horses standing knee-deep in golden straw, eating up their corn with a regular Cottington appetite; that is to say, all the horses except Helvellyn, whose favourite cat was missing, and who steadfastly refused to eat his corn in consequence. A search party was quickly formed to seek for the missing tabby, and she was soon found in the stack-yard, with a mouse in her mouth. She was quickly restored to her disconsolate owner, and the great Helvellyn condescended to eat his luncheon, with his companion coiled up on his quarters.

John led his visitors round the garden, flaming

with rhododendrons and purple iris, and showed them the vineries and peach-houses, and the pens of gold and silver pheasants, and then, at about half-past eleven, as Delia thought it was time for her to be getting back home, the horses were ordered round and Dash prepared to escort her.

The bay mare was followed by a great strapping horse, bay also, and John said,

"I hope you will like your ride to-day, Mr. Fynes; this horse is old Satrap, who won the Chester Cup and twenty thousand pounds for poor Lord Ruswarp. I hunt him sometimes now, and he is a charming hack."

"He's a beauty!" cried Dash; "I am sure we shall get on well together."

Dash assisted Delia to her saddle and mounted Satrap; and, Delia having said good-bye to John and Tom Gatling, they started off at an easy trot along the road towards the downs.

When they reached the foot of the hills they turned to the left, and followed a bridle-path which led them gradually to the top of a high down about three miles from Cottington. Here they pulled up and admired the scenery.

There was a glorious view over hill and dale, green fields and woodland, with the wide-spreading purple of Oldbury common in the middle distance, and the far-off hills of Buckfordshire looking like a dream-country in their veil of opalescent haze.

The lovers became sentimental, and even their horses seemed to be affected, and drew nearer together.

Dash bent over and kissed Delia, and her cheek was wet with a tear.

"What is the matter, darling?" Dash whispered.

"Oh, I don't know," she said; "all this spread of country seems to sadden me, and the great view from this high place makes me feel what little insignificant things we are, after all!"

"I feel that too," said Dash, putting his arm around her, while the horses stood very still, "but I also feel that we have duties and responsibilities in this world, notwithstanding our littleness. I suppose even a cheese-mite has his duties and his worries and his private affairs—I wonder whether the Stiltonians gamble on races?"

A smile stole over Delia's face.

"That brings me back to earth again," she said, laughing. "On Monday you must begin backing our horse for the Derby."

"I had thought of that," answered Dash. "I shall see Walter Nuthall on Monday, and give him a commission to back Samoa."

"Yes," said Delia, "and then I suppose you will go to the bookmakers yourself, and put *Samoa* on?"

"Oh?" howled Dash, at the atrocious pun,

"you must pay a fine of ten kisses for that, and twenty more if it is repeated."

Delia paid the fine.

"I suppose you want Samoa still?" she asked, repeating her offence.

"Twenty, please, this time," said Dash, ruthlessly.

Delia paid again.

"Now," said Dash, "as you have purged your offence, I shall remit the fine: I am going to give all your kisses back to you!" and he did.

"What is that hard thing in your breast-pocket, Dash? Is it a cigar case?"

"No, it is not a cigar case; I was waiting for you to discover it. It is a little remembrance of our first bet, for you," and he drew out a paper parcel, from which he produced a case containing a diamond heart locket, attached to a simple gold chain. On the back of the locket was engraved, "D. to D."

"Oh, Dash! how lovely! what a duck! I must have your photo in it, and I shall always wear it. It is perfectly sweet!"

"I am so glad you like it, darling; I wanted to give you something out of our winnings, to commemorate the opening of our campaign."

"Dash, dear," said Delia, after some moments when speaking had been impossible, "I don't think I shall wear that locket when dad is about, for it

may make him find out that we are partners, and I don't want him to do that yet. I shall wear it all night, though! But come along; there is a splendid piece of turf close here; let us have a gallop!"

She turned the bay mare towards the wide-stretching down-land, and started off on a rousing gallop, followed by Dash on Satrap, who gave his rider enough to do to hold him; for it was long since he had felt the deep-rooted turf throbbing beneath his feet, and the gallant old horse went back in his memory to the days when he was the pride of the racing-stable.

On and on they fled, Delia's hair breaking loose from all control and whistling out behind her in the wind.

They did not draw rein until they had covered a good three miles, and then, having reached the more civilised regions of agriculture, they stopped their horses near a gate, opening upon a rut-seared chalky road which led between high and straggling hedges, direct to the white gates of Oakwood Park, about half-a-mile away.

"I am afraid I must leave you here, dear; I have got to catch the three o'clock train back from Belstone, and I shall not have much time to do it in."

"What a pity you did not send your things on by carrier, and arrange to lunch here! We are

only three miles from Belstone, and it would save your going back all that way."

"As to the ride back, I shall enjoy it—though of course not so much as the ride here—and I must see John Straight alone, for he talks of buying a filly for me, and I want to know more about it."

"Well then, good-bye, dear Dash; and remember, my instructions are, do whatever Mr. Straight recommends. If he says buy a horse, buy it. If he says back a horse, back it, without question!"

So saying, Delia and Dash indulged in a parting embrace, and went their respective ways.

CHAPTER XV.

CHAMBERS.

DASHWOOD FYNES returned to London by the three o'clock train from Belstone, as he had intended ; Mr. Straight himself driving him to the station behind the hog-maned grey.

Sunday he devoted to golf at Woking, where he met several friends of his own profession, who, like himself, found proficiency in the Royal and Ancient game highly conducive to a proper understanding of Law and Equity ; and on Monday he returned to Mr. Twitterton's chambers in the Temple.

On his arrival there Mr. Valpy, the clerk, met him at the door with a deprecating shake of the head.

"I am sorry you were not here on Saturday, sir. Here's a case for opinion from Forder, Son, and Puckridge : it came in on Friday, after you had left, and as Mr. Twitterton was going down to Ipswich that night, he told me to give it to you on Saturday and ask you to do it. It is an important case, and they want it by this afternoon

at latest. We can't afford to disappoint Forder, Son, and Puckridge."

"Sorry I was not here, Valpy; but give it to me now. I will attend to it at once.

' REMINGTON

V.

GRAND SEWAGE CANAL COMPANY, LTD.

Case for opinion,' etc., etc."

Dash opened the papers, which were a formidable pile of documents, and at once set to work.

It was certainly a case of importance, as Valpy had said, involving as it did many thousand pounds, and Dash spent the whole of the morning in searching the Law Reports and looking up leading cases which had a bearing upon the subject, and when three o'clock arrived he had forgotten that the luncheon hour had long passed, so engrossed was he.

But at last the pangs of hunger asserted themselves, and he called to Valpy.

"Valpy, you might get me a cup of tea, and a few biscuits, will you?"

"Certainly sir," said Valpy; and directed the boy who assisted him in his duties to put some water on to boil while he himself went in quest of the biscuits, which furnished him with a good excuse for a visit to the Mitre on his own account.

Just as Dash had completed the writing-out of

the opinion, Mr. Twitterton entered the chambers, having returned from Ipswich.

"How are you, Fynes?" said the barrister.

"Very well, thanks," replied Dash. "I have been struggling all the day with this case of Remington and the Grand Sewage Canal; but I think I have got the hang of it at last!"

"Let me see what you have done," asked Mr. Twitterton, and Dash handed him the papers.

Mr. Twitterton adjusted his pince-nez and scanned the written opinion with evident approval. "That will do very well, Fynes," he said. "Thank you for your trouble—I will just sign it, and then it will be ready for Forder's clerk when he calls."

By this time the tea was ready, and when the boy brought it in, Mr. Twitterton tied the papers together again and handed them to him.

"Did you do much of that on Saturday, Fynes? You seem to have looked up every case which governs the point."

"No, I was away in the country on Saturday, down at Cottington," replied Dash.

"Cottington?" asked Twitterton, "why, is not that where the race-horses are trained?"

"Yes," replied Dash; "there are a great many race-horses trained there."

"Well then, I suppose you found out all about what is going to win the Derby?"

"Yes; I was staying with the trainer, John

Straight, and he has a horse called Samoa, which he fancies ; I saw him gallop on Saturday."

"Saw the Derby horse gallop ? By Jingo, I wish I had been there ! But tell me all about him ; did he go well ? Was he a handsome horse ? You lucky young dog to have the chance of seeing that !"

Mr. Twitterton, in the foregoing sentences, had revealed to Dash quite a new side of his character. Dash knew that his knowledge of men and matters was varied and extensive, gained from his experience in cases which revealed the innermost recesses of the human heart, laid bare to the public gaze. He was aware that Mr. Twitterton could tell strange stories of the careers of many men who now show a bold front to the world, and that he was the repository of the secrets of many a fashionable beauty and dashing actress, but he had never suspected his friend and guide of taking any personal interest in the training and career of the race-horse.

"I not only saw Samoa gallop, but I saw him win his trial !" said Dash, with a touch of pride in his voice.

"Have you backed him ?" asked Twitterton. "What is his price to-day ?"

"Botheration !" exclaimed Dash ; "that reminds me that I had meant to back him to-day, but when I got those blessed papers I set to work on them and clean forgot all about it !"

"Never mind, there will be plenty of time to bet before Wednesday week ; and I am very glad that you got that opinion finished, old fellow ; but when you back him, I should like to have something on too : will you put me ten pounds on ? "

"By all means ; he was at twelve to one in the morning papers. I don't know, of course, what he stands at now."

"The price does not matter. I will stand in with you at whatever you get, if you don't mind."

"All right," replied Dash ; "I will go off in a cab, now, and see what I can do."

"Very well, cut along then."

Dash hurried to Fleet Street, where he called a hansom, and was driven to the Colville Club.

He found Mr. Walter Nuthall there, and told him that he wanted to back Samoa for five hundred pounds.

"Five hundred !" exclaimed Walter Nuthall. "Of course, it is no business of mine to advise you, but is not a 'monkey' a bit thick ? "

"I don't think so," replied Dash ; "I have good reason to fancy the horse, and I want to give some of my Kempton winnings a chance."

"Very well, Mr. Fynes, I will do it for you. I don't expect that I shall be able to get the whole on to-day, as it is getting late now, and a good many of the biggest men may have left the club ;

but I will do the best I can, and write to you to say what I have done. Anything left over I will do to-morrow. I should not be in too much of a hurry to bet, as there was rather a run on Samoa to-day, and they took a hundred to nine freely. He may be easier again in a day or two."

"Do what you think best ; I leave the matter in your hands," said Dash, as he shook hands and went his way.

Mr. Nuthall took a cab and went round to all the betting-clubs, but as he had feared, many of the principal layers had gone home ; still, by dint of perseverance, he was able to obtain two bets of a thousand to ninety and a number of smaller wagers at the same price, amounting in the aggregate to five thousand to four hundred and fifty. Having done this he wrote to Dash, informing him of the state of the commission, and promising to invest the remaining fifty pounds on the morrow.

The next day Dash resumed his labours at the Temple, going into Court with Mr. Twitterton to take notes, as he was in the not unusual position of having no case of his own to attend to.

It was a short case, and by half-past twelve it was over, and Mr. Twitterton had secured a judgment in his client's favour.

Dash then proceeded to tell him of the price which he had secured, one hundred to nine, and

asked whether he would like the odd sovereign put on at another opportunity.

"No, no," said Mr. Twitterton gaily, "a hundred pounds is quite as much as I care to try to win. We will go down to the Bodleian Club, and spend the odd sovereign in a lunch and a bottle of wine."

Dash agreed with alacrity, and, having visited chambers and told Valpy that they should be back at about three, the two distinguished lights of the legal profession walked down to the Embankment and proceeded to the classic portals of the Bodleian Club, where they managed to get as good a lunch as two hungry and healthy men could desire, and presently returned to King's Bench Walk cheered in body and in mind.

The remainder of the week was without incident, as far as Dash was concerned. He went to chambers daily, as usual, and spent a good deal of his time in the Courts or the library.

Mr. Nuthall reported that he had been unable to get on any more money at a hundred to nine, but had taken five hundred to fifty, and so had completed the investment with which he had been charged.

CHAPTER XVI.

GOING DOWN.

It was the morning of the Wednesday in the Epsom Summer Meeting—Derby Day—and, from an early hour breaks and char-à-bancs, costers' barrows, little rickety waggonettes, drawn by some raw-boned old pony, and filled to overflowing with the rank and fashion of the New Cut, had been pouring in an endless stream over the bridges to the Surrey Side, on their way to the fateful Downs.

Dash went down to the Temple in the morning to see whether there were any papers which some, for the time-being, unwelcome solicitor might have had the bad taste to send in to him; but he did this only as a matter of form, for he had definitely resolved that, come what might, he would go to the races; and, in the unlooked-for event of urgent business having been brought to him, he had arranged to pass it on to a friend in the chambers opposite, who had no sporting proclivities, and who would be very glad to act as his substitute, or "devil" for him, as the phrase is.

There were no papers—only a letter from Delia, and a couple of the usual charitable appeals.

Delia began—

“Oakwood Park,

“Belstone.

“Tuesday

“MY DEAR, DARLING OLD DASH,—

“We are not going to London this week, but dad is going to take me to Epsom from Surbiton, where the express from Belstone stops.

“He has hired a private omnibus to take us over to Epsom, so that we shall escape the crush and dust. Mr. Straight came over on Sunday, and I asked him about Samoa.

“He seems quite reconciled to our betting now—at any rate, on this race. When I asked him if he thought he would win, he said,

“‘Well, they say that Magellan is a good horse; all I can say is that he will have to be, if he is to win this Derby!’

“I said, ‘If my dad asked you whether he might bet freely on Samoa, what would you tell him?’

“‘I should tell him he might bet pretty freely,’ answered the old man.

“So I think, Dash, dear, that we had better bet freely; because, after all, we are in the place of dad in this matter; and so, if you have only got the £500 on which you wrote about, I think you had better put on some more. (I would have

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made my beautiful pun again if you had been here, but here is the penalty all the same—x x x x x x x x x—ten of them. I will not welsh you !)

“Seriously, you can risk a good bit more, because we have the money in hand. I shall see you at Epsom, so good-bye till then.

“I remain,

“Your

“DELIA.”

Dash read the letter twice, and then folded it up and put it carefully in his inside pocket.

He had got over any nervousness about betting a large sum, and, in the light of what John Straight had said, he agreed with Delia, and resolved to have a go at the ring when he got down to Epsom.

As he was telling Valpy that he did not expect to return to chambers, and was just leaving, Mr. Twitterton made his appearance.

There was a singular light-heartedness about the eminent junior counsel's attire which attracted Dash's attention at once. Mr. Twitterton wore a very new and shiny hat, and a white waistcoat, and he had a fawn-coloured dust-coat over his arm, and a lavender necktie secured by a pearl pin; added to which, a leathern strap, which suggested race-glasses, peeped from below the folds of the overcoat.

"Good morning, Twitterton," said Dash; "are you going to a wedding to-day?"

"No, my boy, I am going to look after you, and see that you don't get into mischief. In fact, I am going with you to the Derby!"

"Hooray!" exclaimed Dash; "that is good business! But you told me yesterday that you had to be before the Master of the Rolls to-day?"

"I know, but Leatherleigh sent over to me and asked whether I would consent to an adjournment, as he had to go to a funeral in the country; and I agreed. I expect we shall find the worthy silk at Epsom."

Dash laughed. "I think we ought to be going," he said.

"Come along then, I am ready!" cried Twitterton, as he led the way downstairs.

They drove to Victoria and took tickets for the Downs station. Eight shillings each, and no particular class guaranteed, and of course they had to travel in a crowded third.

There was a gang of three-card-trick men in the carriage, and they were barely out of the station when the manipulator of the pack spread his coat on his knee and commenced proceedings.

Having gone through the performance of letting one of his confederates win, and another one turn up the card and show it to Mr. Twitterton, whilst the dealer's attention seemed unaccountably riveted

upon the scenery, as viewed from the window, he turned round and invited the eminent barrister to bet five pounds with him.

Mr. Twitterton had been amused at the proceedings, and he quietly put on his pince-nez and looked at the cards as if he were trying to select the queen.

One of the confederates very kindly turned up the card again for him whilst the sharper was indulging in a fit of sneezing.

"Now," said the sharper, "have a bet, governor; it is the quickness of the hand deceives the eye!"

"But I have already seen the card turned up when you were not looking," said Mr. Twitterton, innocently.

"Never mind that, sir; I'll give you all that in. The eye is not reliable."

"I should think, Mr. Ikey Spielman, that your eyes are certainly not reliable," said the barrister calmly, "or you would have recognised the prosecuting counsel who got you sent to Chelmsford Gaol for three months for card-sharpping on the Great Eastern Railway only two years ago!" and Mr. Twitterton looked sternly at the man.

"Lor' love a duck!" exclaimed Spielman. "I'm fair bested, and no error! But you won't 'and me in this time, governor? Not if me and my pals get out at Clapham? We've all got our living to make, gov'nor."

"Oh no, I don't want to interfere with you, so long as you don't try any tricks on me; but don't forget that I know you!"

"Beg pardon, sir," said the man, one of the gang, who was sitting beside Mr. Twitterton, "but I think you've dropped your scarf-pin. I picked this one up just now on the floor," and he handed Mr. Twitterton's pearl pin back to him.

"Dear me!" said the latter, "very strange that I did not feel it go," and he looked through and through the finder with his penetrating eyes.

"Pins 'ave a 'abit of coming out; specially at race-times; but I give it you back, governor, so there's no more to be said, is there?"

"No, no; but don't let it occur again."

At Clapham the "broad fakers" wanted to get out and change carriages, but they saw that there was a great crowd on the platform and that they would have a very poor chance of getting other seats if they forsook those which they had, so they decided to stay.

Many people tried the door, but a big man who sat in the corner put his head and shoulders out of the window and prevented anyone from coming in.

At last a man took hold of the handle, and begged to be admitted.

"Let me in! I'll stand by the window and won't take up much room, and I'll give you a song going down."

The big man removed his person from the window, and the other jumped in with alacrity, and closed the door behind him.

He had a tall hat and black coat, and he carried a guitar. His features were refined and handsome, but very melancholy; he had curly grey hair, worn somewhat long, and a large ring on his little finger.

He looked round the carriage and scrutinised its inmates, not paying any heed to the card-trick men, but when his eye rested on Mr. Twitterton, it lighted up in recognition.

"How are you, sir? It is a very long time since I had the pleasure of singing to you!" he exclaimed, with the genuine expression of gratification that one feels on meeting an old friend.

"I confess you have the advantage of me," replied Mr. Twitterton. "I don't remember ever seeing you before."

"What! forgotten me! forgotten your poor old minstrel, 'Gravy!' Don't you remember how I sang to you and the other young gentlemen at Bottisham, when you were going home from Newmarket in a dog-cart, and how you gave me a lift back to Cambridge, and made me sing all the way?"

"Dear me! dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Twitterton, "I do believe I remember something about it now; but it is so long ago! I wonder you have not forgotten it by this time."

"You see, gov'nor, I'm not the only person to forget a chivy," broke in the three-card man.

"I remember it as clear as yesterday," continued Gravy. "We stopped at a skittle-alley outside Cambridge, and a billiard-sharp got you to back him at skittles, and when he had only to knock down one pin to win, he fell down and pretended to be drunk, and let you all in."

"I remember that."

"Yes; and then we went into your rooms at Jesus Lane and had drinks, and when I left, you were all drunk, and I was hardly fit to go to a Quaker's meeting."

"That will do," said Mr. Twitterton; "I am glad to see you again."

"Ah," said Gravy, "Cambridge is not what it was!" and he sighed retrospectively. "I had a lot of friends there among the undergraduates, but they don't want me there now! Friends!" he continued, "they have all gone. I've got two sons in the army, but they are out in Africa—and don't seem likely to come back in a hurry. No! I am a lonely old man now!" and a tear stole out of his eye and trickled down his cheek.

"Cheer up, Gravy!" said the man in the corner, "we are going to Epsom and be jolly; we ain't going to a prayer meeting. Let's have a song! Sing us something with a bit of pepper in it."

Gravy took his guitar and stroked it lovingly.

Then he struck a few chords, but they were not cheerful ones.

"I will do the best I can," he said, "but you must not be hard on me, for I am an old man, and pepper is off! I will sing you rather a sad little song. It is a love song—a song of unrequited love; one of the things which might happen to any of us!"

He swept the strings again and began, in a weak and husky, but not unmusical voice:—

"A policeman was strolling one day on his beat,
And he thought of the cooks he was mashing;
As he passed by an area, the sound of his feet
Disturbed a young girl at her washing.
He put on his best smile and said 'How do you do
If there's no one at home, I should like to help you!'
But she said 'Get away with you, Little Boy Blue'
And went on with her rinsing and splashing.

"The Slop, undefeated, went down the stone stairs,
And he placed on the table his cady;
Then he stretched himself out on a couple of chairs,
And whispered soft words to the lady.
'It's your beauty,' he said, 'I admire, not your pelf!
Though, of course, if it's handy to find on the shelf,
I could do with a bit of cold mutton, myself,
For I'm feeling quite fagged out and jady!'

"Then he said, 'Such sweet lips as those ought to be kissed,
And proceeded with kisses to mop her,
But the girl broke away, and she ups with her fist,
And bashed him, and nothing could stop her!
She knocked all his notions of love into space:
In vain he attempted to flee from the place—
She pasted her Reckitt all over his face,
And then landed the 'Cop' in the copper!"

The strings throbbed sadly into silence as the last note died down, like a weary spirit wandering away into the unknown, and the pale and withered old man, whose grey eyes during his song had been dreamily cast upwards, suddenly pulled himself together, and in a business-like way took off his hat and passed it round.

Everyone gave him something, for even the card-sharpers pulled out a copper or two for him as a propitiatory offering to the goddess of Luck, and when the hat came to Dash and Twitterton, they each put in half-a-crown.

Gravy received his hat back with many expressions of gratitude.

"It is a long time since I had such a good beginning to a Derby Day!" he exclaimed, as he pouched the money. "And now, gentlemen, what's going to win to-day?"

Most of them said Magellan, of course, but Dash boldly declared that Samoa could not be beaten.

"And what do you say, my old patron?" asked Gravy of Mr. Twitterton.

"I say the same as my friend—Samoa," replied Twitterton.

"Then Samoa shall carry my money!" exclaimed Gravy; "the youngest man here and the wisest both say he will win, and when Luck and Judgment agree, it is good enough to follow!"

The train drew into the Downs station. and

Gravy leaped out with an agility which defied his years, and walked quickly along the platform, saluting his many patrons, and twanging his guitar as he went.

Twitterton and Dash followed, and engaged a cab in the station yard.

Just as they were starting for the Grand Stand they saw Tom Gatling, and Dash called to him and offered him a seat, which Tom gladly accepted.

Dash was about to introduce him to Mr. Twitterton, but, to his surprise, he found that they already knew each other, for Mr. Twitterton had appeared for the jockey in one of the vexatious horse cases which it is the lot of every distinguished racing-man, at some time or other, to have to fight; Tom's honour had been vindicated with flying colours, and he was naturally glad to see his counsel again.

"I have backed Samoa," said Mr. Twitterton, after they had exchanged greetings and were well on their way. "Do you think I did rightly?"

"Well," replied Tom, "Mr. Fynes can tell you as much as I can about that—personally, I think he will win. My son Leicester rides, and he is very sweet on his mount."

"Have you backed him yourself?" asked Twitterton.

"Yes, I have a trifle on; I never bet at all heavily; but you will be able to judge better of

his chance after the first race. Mr. Straight runs Agulhas, and he has been in some of Samoa's gallops, so we shall get a line through him. But here we are ; thank you for the lift ; we shall meet later on in the paddock."

So saying, Tom Gatling left his friends to get their stand tickets, while he went to the weighing-room to see his son.

"I don't think I shall go into Tattersall's, Fynes old chap," said Mr. Twitterton. "I am not going to bet any more, or if I do I can get you to put my money on."

"All right," answered Dash ; "but first we must have some provender. Let us find the luncheon place."

This they easily managed, and they can now safely be left to discuss mayonnaise of salmon and cold chicken.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE Paddock.

SIR ROBERT ASHINGTON and Delia stood under the shade of the high hedge while John Straight saddled Agulhas for the first race.

One or two straggling on-lookers were gazing from a more respectful distance, but there were very few people as yet in the paddock, on account of its distance and inaccessibility from the stands.

When his business was finished to his satisfaction, John gave the horse a pat of dismissal, and the boy walked him round.

"What do you think of our chance this time?" asked Delia, as the trainer joined them.

"Oh, Agulhas is very well, and he stays the mile; but it will not take a very good one to beat him—still, he has got a chance."

"Jockeys, mount, please!" was shouted, and Sam Player, with his pale face looking the more fine-drawn from the flare of the nasturtium cap, approached them, and was hoisted into the saddle.

Hamilton Rolfe was hanging about like some

dark bird of prey in the offing. He had not ventured to approach the party, for he still had misgivings as to whether John Straight had recognised him at the Grasshopper, when he had bought the Fortuna filly.

"I will wait till old Straight leaves them," he determined, "and then I will ask Sir Robert. Anyhow, it is no good to ask Straight; for I could not get anything out of him about Phantom City at Kempton, and I believe he purposely misled me."

So, with this intention, Rolfe shadowed the baronet and his daughter.

But he was doomed to further delay in his plans, for at the gate of the paddock who should they meet but Mr. Twitterton and Dashwood Fynes.

Mr. Twitterton was presented to Delia and Sir Robert, and they all went back together to the Grand Stand.

Sir Robert led the way with Twitterton, and Delia followed with Dash.

"What is the order of the day this time, darling?" whispered Dash.

"I do not think Mr. Straight fancies ours very much—we had better have a hundred on," replied Delia, "just to open the ball."

"Very well, I will go into the ring and do it. Is Samoa all right?"

"Yes; as well as anybody could wish. Don't forget to back him well!"

"As if I should forget! Why, Twitterton and I have been talking of nothing else but Samoa. He has got nine pounds on, and he is under the impression that I have about forty, which he considers a great deal too much for me to risk—and, of course, so it would be, under ordinary circumstances. But our case is exceptional. I don't forget your watchword, 'Victory, or the Cape!'"

They reached the steps leading up to the Stand, and Sir Robert paused and said—

"Our box is number nine, and we shall be delighted to have you, Dash, and Mr. Twitterton there, whenever you care to come up to see a race."

"Many thanks," answered Mr. Twitterton; "I should like to go there now, if you will allow me. Fynes, you might put me a sovereign on Agulhas."

"Very well," said Dash, "and I will join you in the box directly."

Hamilton Rolfe had not had an opportunity of asking Sir Robert what he thought of his horse, but when he saw Dash leave the party and make for the ring, he considered that that young man would have been told all that there was to tell, and that if he watched him bet he would learn all that he wanted to know.

Dash fought his way through the inconvenient entrance into Tattersall's, and there was such a throng there that he was not inclined to go farther

in than was necessary, so he was delighted to find that Mr. Bob Hopping had taken a pitch close to the gate, and to that worthy metalician he addressed himself.

"What price Agulhas, Mr. Hopping?"

"Six to one, sir."

"I will take six hundred to one!" said Dash.

"Thank you, sir—six hundred to one, Agulhas, Mr. Fynes," and the clerk booked the bet as Dash turned to go to the private box.

"Six hundreds!" thought Rolfe, whose eagerly listening ears had overheard. "I never thought young Fynes betted like that. They must fancy their horse very much!" and he pushed his way down to the rails and took several big bets about Agulhas.

Dash soon found the box, where Sir Philip Stokes had joined Sir Robert and Delia, and was vying with Mr. Twitterton in making himself agreeable to the young lady.

The horses had gone to the post, and were soon dispatched upon their journey. Agulhas looked dangerous at the distance, but he was easily passed by Merchant Prince, and only finished third.

"A good thing we did not plunge," remarked Delia to Dash, whilst Mr. Twitterton simulated great distress at the loss of his pound, and they all laughed heartily at the comical faces which he made.

"He ran as well as I expected," said Sir Robert. "Merchant Prince is a pretty good horse."

"What do you say to a bottle of champagne, and then a visit to the paddock?" asked Sir Philip.

"I think it is an admirable suggestion," said Sir Robert. "Delia and I have not had luncheon yet, and I propose that we combine the two."

The judge assented, and Mr. Twitterton said that although he had already had a snack, his grief had so debilitated him that he needed further aliment.

Dash alone begged to be excused. He wished to keep a very clear head, and besides, he thought that the present would be a fine opportunity to visit the ring and put a bit more money on Samoa.

They rallied him about the young men of the present day not being able to face their food, but Delia, who knew his intentions, said,

"Come along! If Dash does not want any luncheon, Mr. Twitterton will have to eat enough for two. I am very hungry, and can't wait. Sir Philip, will you take me up to the luncheon room?"

Dash went down to the ring, which was now easy to get about in.

"Hundred to nine, Samoa!" he heard on all sides, for the defeat of his stable companion had had a depressing effect on the backers of the Derby horse.

Dash strolled leisurely through the ranks of the bookmakers, and suddenly he heard the metallic

voice of Gus Daniels rise above the shouts of his neighbours.

"Here! Thousand to eighty, Samoa!" he cried.

"I will take that," quietly interposed Dash.

"Yes. Twice, if you like?"

"Twice."

Having booked the bet, Dash looked about for some more layers willing to offer the extended odds, but so sensitive is the ring that the mere acceptance by Dash of Mr. Daniels' bet steadied the market, and nothing beyond a hundred to nine could be obtained.

However, there was plenty of money at this price, and Dash took it to five hundred pounds more; and having now invested eleven hundred and fifty pounds, he passed through the little gate on to the course, and worked his way through the mass of seething humanity which choked the way to the paddock.

When he rejoined Delia, they managed to detach themselves from the rest of the party, and took a walk down to the sheds where a few of the horses are saddled.

"Tell me, Dash, how do we stand now on Samoa?" asked Delia.

"I have been backing him again, and altogether we have got eleven hundred and sixty pounds on, and stand to win thirteen thousand and fifty-five pounds. At least, that would be so if I had not

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let Twitterton have a hundred to nine of it, which brings it down to twelve thousand nine hundred and fifty five."

"That will do very well, Dash. I am glad it does not quite reach the £13,000, as thirteen is an unlucky number."

They wandered on, chatting and building castles in the air, and perfectly neglectful of the second race on the card, until all at once half-a-dozen horses galloped through the wide gates into the paddock, and Delia had to take the shelter of the hawthorn tree to avoid being run over. The other horses had been pulled up on the course, and these quickly turned and joined them as they went back to weigh-in.

"Let us go and look for Samoa," said Dash ;
"I should like to see him."

"Come along, then ; here he comes. Don't you recognise the navy-blue clothing ?"

Two horses were approaching them along the black palings. The first was Euphrates, who had been sent to act as companion to the crack, and the second was Samoa.

Both were in Sir Robert's well-known navy blue, and they were followed by a large concourse of sightseers.

Samoa looked cool and unconcerned. He had had a plentiful meal before leaving his stable, where he had passed the night in the company

of the tabby cat, which he had borrowed from Helvellyn for the occasion, and had left that solacing quadruped safely confined in a large wicker basket, awaiting his return. He was a big bay horse of remarkable power, and the deep furrows between the ridges of muscle on his quarters proclaimed that he had done plenty of work and had thriven on it.

Dash and Delia looked at him in admiration.

"How grand he looks!" Dash said. "What a contrast to the light-boned Euphrates!"

"Yes, and look how he brings his hind legs under him as he walks! Why he steps about a foot in front of the print of his fore-hoof every time."

As they were watching Samoa, Walter Nuthall came to them.

"Your horse looks splendid, Miss Ashingdon," he said; "I do believe you are going to win the Derby!"

"I hope you are backing him, Mr. Nuthall. Mr. Straight thinks he has a great chance."

"Oh, yes; I backed him last week, and shall back him again now I have seen him. I wish you every success, I am sure."

And Mr. Nuthall left them to look at the other competitors.

Magellan was a nice horse, but good judges wished that he had been a little bit bigger, and

Quasimodo, to Delia's mind, moved rather stiffly. Mosstrooper looked well and full of fire, whilst Vengeance did not look "class enough" for a Derby winner. In fact, our lovers had some fault to find with all the runners except Samoa, who, in their view, looked as if he could carry the rest.

Rolfe was in the bar of the paddock, comparing notes with Whispers. He had had a good win on the second race, and was on very good terms with himself.

"What's your own fancy, Whispers?" he asked.

"Well," replied that worthy, "to tell you the truth, I like the looks of Samoa best; but you can't go on looks for a race like this, and Samoa has not run this year, and was only third in the Dewhurst Plate last back-end (though, of course, he was backward then), and I think the best public form is the thing to go on. I fancy Magellan."

"Yes, so do I," replied Hamilton Rolfe. "The way he won the Two Thousand is enough for me; besides, John Straight's stable may be out of form; Agulhas did not run up to expectations in the first race."

"Did they fancy Agulhas?" asked Whispers.

"Well, I saw a friend of Sir Robert's backing him in hundreds, so I should think they did."

"That settles it then," said Whispers; "if they fancied Agulhas, this here horse has not got much chance. I shall go for Magellan, if I do have to

lay odds of seven to four on, for even that is better than losing."

But the numbers are up; the course is being cleared; people are trooping back to the stands and carriages, and struggling to place themselves in advantageous positions for seeing the race.

The betting in the rings and along the rails is fast and furious. From the poor man who has padded the hoof from London to put his "tanner" on his fancy, to the rich man who is plunging in his thousands, everyone is at the highest pitch of excitement, and the pulse of even the most hardened race-goer beats a trifle faster as the moment approaches for the decision of the world's greatest horse race.

One by one the competitors issue from the paddock gates, and walk composedly along the rails, which are lined with a surging, clamouring crowd. They pass like kings among their people, accepting the plaudits of the multitude with an air of benevolent superiority and dignity; looking upon the throng as one mass and not as units, and condescending to parade before them because it is the usage of their court to show themselves to their subjects in all the circumstance of majesty.

It is their birthright! Whichever of these horses shall win to-day, there is not one of them who cannot claim that his ancestors have been the proudest in the land, and each feels the obli-

gation of his lineage and high station to preserve an unruffled demeanour in the presence of the populace.

They turn and canter back.

Mosstrooper comes first, striking high into the air as he fights for his head, and impatient of the restraining bit.

Then follows Quasimodo, sedate and lumbering by comparison.

Magellan, proud in the remembrance of his recent victory, bounds onward like a Haskell ball, and a great murmur of admiration bursts from the crowd.

And now comes Samoa, glorying in his strength ; he does not seem to hurry ; he lobs along, with his great hind legs brought well under him, showing marvellous leverage, and taking in a croquet lawn at every stride, and his bay coat gleams like new-spilt blood in the sunshine.

He is followed by Vengeance, St. Nicholas, and the rest, eleven in all, and they soon pass out of sight of the clamorous multitude, to re-appear presently at the starting-post far away over the hill, beyond the booths and tents and merry-go-rounds, the carriages and the crowd.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SAMOA.

THE horses were at the post, where a comparatively small group of spectators had assembled. These were genuine sportsmen, poor fellows whose straitened circumstances forbade them the luxury of entrance to the paddock, but they were nevertheless true lovers of the thoroughbred horse, and they knew from experience that the view of the race which a man is able to get from the part of the course which is open free to the public is hardly worth the trouble of going to see. There is a dense crowd hemming one in on every side, and even if one manages to get a view of a few yards of the course before the horses make the bend at Tattenham Corner, the chances are that the moment the shout "Here they come!" is raised, one will be swept off one's legs by the surging sea of human beings, and perhaps hardly get a view of a single jockey's cap.

But at the starting-post, a man who loves the sport for its own sake can take stock of all the

competitors, and admire their action and symmetry as they walk quietly to the starting-point, or rear up and swerve round suddenly as if to decline the combat.

Then, when they are at last sent upon their fateful journey, it is possible to run to some high point on the hill, from which a very fair view of the greater part of the race can be obtained, and many slender-pursed enthusiasts who know this, take the tramp across the down contentedly, and reap a rich reward in the feast of the eye which they are enabled thus to obtain.

But Sir Robert's party, having a comfortable box from which to view the contest, were under no obligation to follow the horses farther.

"What's that rearing and refusing to join his field?" asked Sir Philip Stokes. "It looks like Mosstrooper."

"It is Mosstrooper," said Sir Robert; "he looked full of beans in the paddock."

"There is a man going forward to lead him up to them," said Dash.

The horse was successfully led up to the starter, but the moment he was free he swung round and was a quarter of a mile away again before one could say "Jack Robinson."

Again he was brought back, and again repeated the same conduct, and some of the other horses, impatient of the delay, and depraved by the bad

example of Mosstrooper, began to show indications of a desire to imitate him; however, all things come to an end sooner or later, and at length the pent-up feelings of the onlookers were relieved in a roar of "They're off!"

As often happens, Mosstrooper, who had occasioned all the delay at the post, was first on his legs—indeed, he got a flying start, and dashed away at the head of his field with a lead of a couple of lengths. The rest got off fairly evenly together, with the exception of the slow-starting Quasimodo, who suffered a good deal from the deliberateness of his temperament.

They streamed along up the hill by the side of the bushes, looking, from the stand, like the little horses that race round a table at continental casinos.

Mosstrooper kept command, followed by Vengeance, and something in red, and then came the favourite, Magellan, with Samoa just behind him, and Quasimodo, just beginning to understand the nature of the business in hand, making efforts to recover his lost ground, and even gaining a little upon those in front of him.

When they were running along the top of the hill there were shouts of "Mosstrooper," for this fiery animal was still leading, and the name of those who had taken five and six to one about him was legion. But as they approached Tattenham Corner

Magellan began to draw up and quickly passed Vengeance, Samoa still going easily in his wake. The famous corner was reached, and then the shouts were for Magellan, for he was seen to be upsideways with Mosstrooper. Then, for a moment, it was difficult, from the box, to tell which was leading, but there was no doubt that Magellan, Mosstrooper, and Samoa were the foremost horses. Down the hill they came, and the vast multitude closed behind them like an enormous black V, and it could now be seen that Magellan and Samoa had both said farewell to the gallant Mosstrooper, and were fighting a duel to the death between themselves. Neck and neck they reached the Bell, and the excitement was breathless; men forgot to shout in the intensity of their feeling. Out came the whip to Magellan at last, and then rose the deadly cry, "The favourite's beat! ten to one on Samoa!"

But Magellan was not beaten yet! With a splendid effort he hurled himself forward and again took the lead about a neck.

Again the cry arose, but this time it was "Magellan wins! Good old Magellan! Two to one on the favourite!" And indeed it looked so, for Magellan retained his advantage until within fifty yards of the winning post, and poor Delia turned her head away.

"Look, Delia!" cried Dash. "Look at Lei-

cester ! ” and she turned in time to see a marvellous piece of horsemanship.

With his legs tightly gripped around Samoa, the jockey sat with set, stern face, and literally seemed to lift his horse up and throw him forward ! The mighty leverage came into play, and, in three giant strides, Samoa had hurtled past his adversary and won the Derby by a neck !

Five lengths away Mosstrooper was third, and the rest came in at straggling intervals.

“ Come on, Bob ! ” cried Sir Philip Stokes ; “ let us see you lead the winner in ! ”

Sir Robert was like a man in a dream, and he suffered the old judge to take his arm and conduct him down the stairs and through the club enclosure on to the course, where the crowd was already pressing in on every side.

As for Delia, she could not speak, and was afraid of making a scene, so she ran out of the box and down a corridor at the back, and Dash darted after her.

Mr. Twitterton thought it discreet to remain in the box, where he stood smiling and waving his hat as if he himself had been the owner of the winner.

Dash found Delia in a deserted passage. If it had not been for his concern for her, his own feelings would have choked him ; but he remained master of himself, and going up to her, put his arm round her waist and whispered “ Darling ! ”

Delia turned to him, and, burying her face on his shoulder, burst into tears.

It was only a momentary ebullition, the safety-valve opening to relieve the over-strained heart, and in a moment or two she was smiling through her tears, and Dash was kissing her at the rate of fifty-nine to the minute, which, as everyone knows, is almost record speed for lovers' kisses.

"Stop, Dash! There's somebody coming!" she said at last. "Come back to the box and see dad bring Samoa in."

They were in plenty of time, for Samoa had travelled some distance before being able to be pulled up, and as they entered the box Mr. Twiterton grasped Delia's hand and shook it warmly.

"My dear Miss Ashingdon," he exclaimed, "this is the proudest day of my life! To sit with the owner of a Derby horse and his charming daughter, and to see that horse win so magnificently, is worth going miles for! I cannot think how you bore the strain!"

"Oh, Mr. Twiterton, I am afraid I was very foolish; I cried a little."

"Cried!" replied the jovial barrister. "I should have had a fit if I had been you; as it is, I am trembling all over!"

"Here they come," said Dash, and a posse of policemen pushed their way through the crowd and made a path for Magellan, who was reeking

with sweat, and looked very distressed. His jockey, too, looked crest-fallen and disappointed, as well he might be, for it was only Leicester Gatling's superhuman determination which landed Samoa in front of him ; but this did not in any measure allay his disappointment, but rather added to it.

Then came Mosstrooper, and then, following a mounted policeman, strode the mighty Samoa, the hero of the hour.

Sir Robert held the rein in his right hand and took off his hat to acknowledge the cheering of the crowd, with his left. He looked calm and composed now, but prematurely stiff. Leicester Gatling sat unconcernedly upon his horse with the grip of his knees relaxed and his elbows somewhat out, and so, amidst the tempestuous vociferations of the people, they gained the shelter of the enclosure and proceeded to the scales.

"All right!" was very soon proclaimed, and John Straight took his horse under his own charge, leaving Sir Robert free to receive the congratulations of his hosts of friends.

"Thanks, thanks!" said Sir Robert. "He is a good horse! but what a marvellous race Gatling rode! I have never seen the like!"

"Yes," said Lord Thistleton; "they may well call him a prince of jockeys."

As far as our friends were concerned, there was no more racing that day. They crossed the course

and had a glass of wine at Lord Thistleton's coach, and strolled about the paddock for half an hour or so, and generally enjoyed the fruits of victory, and then it was time to start for Surbiton again to catch the down train to Belstone.

The private omnibus was waiting in the roadway a little way down the hill from the paddock, and thither Sir Robert and Delia, with John Straight, who was going home by the same train, prepared to join it.

"By the way, Mr. Twitterton," said Sir Robert, "how are you and Dashwood going back?"

"The way we came, I suppose; from the Downs Station," answered Mr. Twitterton.

"Oh, don't do that! You will have a dreadful crush. Why not come with us as far as Surbiton, and take a train from there direct to London?"

"With all my heart," said the barrister. "You don't want to stay here any longer, do you, Fynes?"

"Not I," replied Dash; "after seeing a race like that it would be sacrilege to take any interest in the others—besides, I would much rather go with Sir Robert and Miss Ashingdon."

"And am I to be left alone?" asked a mock-querulous voice, and Sir Philip Stokes came forward, holding his hat in front of him like a beggar. "Don't forget a poor old man, sir."

"My dear Stokes! I did not know where you, had got to—come along, by all means."

There was a hamper on the top of the omnibus, and, before leaving, it was necessary to explore its mysterious contents; and when foie gras sandwiches and Perrier Jouet had been discussed, the party took their seats and the omnibus drove away, leaving the crush and turmoil of the race-course, and, after passing through Epsom town, threading its way through green summer lanes right away to Surbiton.

A merry drive it was and a noisy one, everyone having something to tell, and no one having time to listen to anyone else; and even the old judge could not make his weighty remarks heard until he recommended the men to brush the chalk-dust from their hats, and proceeded to set an example by flicking his own with a bandanna silk handkerchief.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE.

DASH sent his account to Mr. Walter Nuthall with the request that he would settle it, and in due course received a cheque for the amount of his winnings.

He had now a sum of over £15,000 lying at his banker's, and was seriously embarrassed as to how to invest it.

However, he thought that, as he might lose it all back again before he had made an end of gambling, the best thing for him to do was to put it on deposit at the bank, so that it might be withdrawable at short notice if occasion should arise; and this he decided to do.

It happened that the fortnight between Epsom and Ascot was a very busy one in the chambers at King's Bench Walk. As often happens, a number of important cases in which Mr. Twitterton was engaged came on, or threatened to come on, at the same time, and Dash was kept at work all

day, sometimes taking a note in Court, and occasionally holding a brief for his friend.

Then there was a big Society libel action in the list, in which Dash had a junior brief of his own, and upon the details of which he spent many hours of study ; so that he had no time to go racing, even if he had had the inclination to do so. But he was quite content to rest for a while on his oars, and enjoy the pleasing reflection that he had done extremely well at Epsom ; so that he did not have a bet at Manchester or Lincoln or any other meeting.

He hoped to be able to go to Ascot, but the libel case before referred to might come on at any time ; and if it should be heard during the Ascot week, of course he would have to forego the pleasure of going to the meeting.

He wrote to Delia, telling her how he was placed, and asking her to let him know if anything was to be backed at Ascot, so that he could do it at starting price, if necessary.

Delia wrote back a sweet little letter, telling him that of course he must not think of sacrificing his prospects at the Bar for the sake of going racing, and promising to see John Straight, and let Dash know what he advised.

So Dash plodded on in the Courts, and shortly before the end of the week prior to Ascot, the fear that the libel case would come on at the time

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when he least desired it, became a certainty, and he wrote again to tell Delia that he would not be able to be at Ascot.

Then, on the morning of the Monday in Ascot week, when Dash called at Chambers to get his papers before going into Court, he found the following letter from Delia :—

“ Oakwood Park,
“ Belstone,
“ Sunday.

“ DEAREST DASH,—

“ Of course I am bitterly disappointed that you are not able to go to Ascot, but I rejoice at the reason.

“ Oh, Dash, dear, how I should love to see you in your wig and gown, cross-examining old Lady Gallsting ! I do hope you will make her squirm ! Mind you make a splendid speech to the jury ! I shall read all about it in the papers, and think of you in Court all day ; so cheer up, and mind you win your case !

“ But now about business.

“ Mr. Straight is taking twelve horses to Ascot, seven of them two-year-olds, and hopes to win some races.

“ Helvellyn has a chance for the Royal Hunt Cup, but being stopped in his work has not improved it. Put £100 on Helvellyn.

"Agulhas and Euphrates have not much chance ; don't back them.

"Cicely might win, but I think £50 is enough to have on her.

"The old Huntsman is going out for his annual race, and I think we might trust him with £100. Now as to the two-year-olds—three of them are very good, and Mr. Straight thinks they ought to be backed, so put £100 on each. They are Osiris, Phaeton, and Mary Seaton. The others are best left alone.

"I shall write to you again if I hear anything ; and perhaps if I don't, just to remind you of my existence.

"But now good-bye, my dear old boy,

"With the true love of your

"DELIA.

"P.S.—I am horribly excited about your case to-morrow !"

Dash could not help smiling at Delia's idea of the part which he was likely to play in the great case, when he knew that, unless Mr. Twitterton and the distinguished K.C., Mr. Rumpus, who was leading, were both absent, the amount of oratory which he would be called upon to exert would be limited to the few words spoken at the beginning of the case, which are called "opening the pleadings ;" but he had good reason to believe that

Lady Gallsting would not escape the experience of being made to squirm in consequence of his silence, for Mr. Rumpus was an excellent hand at this exhilarating exercise, whilst Mr. Twitterton was quite an artist at it.

But with regard to the bets, as he did not know on what days the horses which he was to back were to run, he wrote a note to Mr. Nuthall asking him to put the sums specified on them for whatever races they should run in, and having given this note to the boy with instructions to send it on at once by hand, he crossed over the way and went into the robing-room of the Royal Courts of Justice, where he put on his wig and gown and clean white bands, and entered the crowded court which was to be the scene of trial of the sensational action. He took his seat beside Mr. Twitterton, and behind a place left vacant in the front row of seats for the accommodation of Mr. Rumpus, K.C., their leader, who was not expected to come into Court till the last moment.

There was a very full Bar, and the Court was crammed with ladies in their best dresses and largest hats, who had come thither to gloat over the washing of very dirty linen, and in the devout hope that not one stain nor one soilure would escape public exposure and a thorough soaping and mangling.

Presently Mr. Rumpus came rolling into Court.

He was very fat and pink, and had three or four double chins ; but he was one of the greatest men at the Bar, intellectually as well as physically.

He turned round and chatted with Twitterton, and nodded pleasantly to Dash.

Then the usher called "Si-lence !" and Mr. Justice Retford took his place on the bench and bowed to the Court, as everyone rose to receive him.

Mr. Twitterton whispered to Dash to open the pleadings, which he thereupon stood up and did, feeling rather nervous, because of the importance of the case and the many eyes that were upon him.

Then the great case began in earnest, and Mr. Rumpus scattered flowers of oratory around in his opening speech ; but, as the proceedings lasted for the next three days, it would be inconvenient to follow them through all their details.

Let it suffice to say that the ladies in Court were not baulked of their unsavoury repast, for the case was one of those where a spiteful woman had got hold of a regrettable passage in the life of another, which she, poor thing, had hoped was buried in the past ; and adding many aggravating details out of the rich store-house of her imagination, the wicked slanderer had been pursuing her victim and setting everyone against her who showed any disposition to receive her kindly. At length Lady Gallsting went a step too far, and

wrote a letter to a true friend of the other woman, in which she repeated her atrocious accusations; this friend handed the letter to the plaintiff, and hence the action arose.

Dash had little expectation of being heard in the case; but on the third day, just about the time that the Royal Hunt Cup was being run for at Ascot, Mr. Twitterton had been called away to another Court, and Mr. Rumpus, seeing that a witness for the defence had just been called, whose examination in chief was expected to be a lengthy one, had taken the opportunity of going outside for a few minutes to stretch his legs, as the hard seats told severely upon a man of his great bulk.

But quite unexpectedly, this witness, who was a hairdresser who, according to the defendant, had provided her with her facts, and was prepared to support them, gave such unsatisfactory and unexpected answers, that Lady Gallsting's counsel dropped him like a hot coal and hastily resumed his seat.

Then came Dash's one opportunity, and he resolved to use it for all it was worth. He took the witness in hand, as he was obliged to do in the absence of his leaders, and, working on one or two admissions which he had let slip in his examination-in-chief, he elicited that the hairdresser was paid by Lady Gallsting to furnish her with

details of any scandalous stories which might find their way to his ears ; and as the shop in which he worked was a fashionable one, frequented a good deal by the most dashing beauties of Society and the stage, and as these ladies loved to talk freely to the assistants about the private affairs of their acquaintances while they were having their hair dressed, it followed that Lady Gallsting was daily provided with a plentiful store of gossip of the most highly-seasoned kind.

But the tales which Lady Gallsting had woven around the one unfortunate truth of which by some means she had obtained possession, had been told to her by the witness, not about the plaintiff, but of a perfectly different person ; and he had no knowledge of the plaintiff herself nor of anything about her.

With a few more questions, Dash sat down, having done irretrievable damage to the defendant's character, and the wretched hairdresser stumbled from the witness-box in a semi-dazed condition.

The foreman of the jury then stood up and intimated that they did not care to hear any more witnesses, as they had made up their minds ; but the learned judge decided that they must hear any further evidence which the defence might wish to call.

Mr. Twitterton and Mr. Rumpus had both resumed their seats while Dash was administering

his scathing cross-examination to the hairdresser, but neither of them interfered, even to suggest a question ; for Dash appeared to be fully capable of dealing with the witness, and the two older men generously refrained from doing anything which might in any way detract from the single-handed success which their young friend was achieving.

But when Dash sat down, Mr. Rumpus turned round in his place with his jolly face festooned in smiles, and nodded his congratulations, and Twitterton took hold of Dash's knee and pinched it hard ; which was his method of conveying the expression of his satisfaction.

The defence hurriedly called another witness to try to dispel the unfavourable effect of Dash's cross-examination, but with no success. All the life seemed to have faded out of the case, and everyone knew what the result must be.

Then the learned leaders addressed the Court, and the judge summed up shortly, and the jury—without retiring—gave their verdict for the plaintiff, and cast Lady Gallsting in damages to the amount of £5,000.

There was nothing more to be done. Dash gathered up his papers and handed them to the clerk, and crossed the Strand to King's Bench Walk, arm-in-arm with Mr. Twitterton.

There, over a cup of tea, Mr. Twitterton asked

Dash whether he thought of going to Ascot on the morrow, and, being answered in the affirmative, declared that he would go too, just to get a blow of fresh air, and drive the unsavoury memory of Lady Gallsting from his mind.

And so, having agreed to meet at Waterloo next morning, they put on their hats and went their ways, well pleased with themselves and the world in general.

Whilst Dash had been so busily engaged in Court, the first two days of Ascot had had the following results for the Cottington stable. On the Tuesday, Agulhas had run second for the Trial Plate, and Cicely had been beaten in the Biennial ; but Osiris, the crack two-year-old, had won the Coventry Stakes, starting at nine to four.

On the Wednesday, Helvellyn was beaten in the Royal Hunt Cup, which was won by Flannigan's Pride, who thus atoned for his disqualification at Kempton, and Phaeton won the Fern Hill Stakes, starting at three to one ; so that when Dash reckoned up his starting-price bets, he found that he was a winner of £365 on the two days.

The morning of the Cup day was all that could be desired in the matter of weather, with a hot sun and a cool breeze, and our friends met on the platform feeling as elated as a couple of schoolboys playing truant.

There was a crush of pretty women arrayed in

their most fetching frocks, but Twitterton spotted two vacant corner seats in a smoking carriage, and these he and Dash quickly occupied; and then, lighting up two big cigars, they settled down and perused their newspapers with intense satisfaction.

They reached Ascot without adventure, and having walked up the long asphalted path which leads to the race-course, they bought tickets for the Grand Stand, Tattersall's, and the Paddock, and found their pockets encumbered with an inconvenient amount of pasteboard.

"Why can't I have one ticket for the whole thing?" asked Twitterton, querulously, as he found that, not only had he to carry the large cards, out of which the man at the gate had nipped three jagged pieces, but he was required to take a return pass whenever he went from one place to another, and he complained that it was no good his coming in his best clothes if all his pockets were to be bulged out with the beastly cards.

They found Delia and Mrs. Vasher Baines in the paddock; and Delia, who had not expected to see Dash, was overjoyed at his advent, and loaded him with praise for his clever cross-examination.

Mr. Twitterton generously added his testimony to Dash's merit, and dear little Delia looked upon her lover with pride and veneration.

Dash tried to explain that he had done nothing particular, and that the hairdresser's own side had left him beaten to his hand ; but it was no good, and he remained, in Delia's estimation, the future Lord Chief Justice.

Dash and Delia did not pay much attention to the racing, although Huntsman ran in the All-aged Stakes, and won ; but Dash did not bet upon him, being satisfied with the hundred he had on S.P., for he had come for pleasure, and not for business.

There was nothing from Cottington in the Gold Cup, so that Delia and Dash went down to the bottom of the lawn to look on, and, incidentally, to have a delightful chat and to make plans for the future ; and as the two-year-old which Sir Robert ran in the next race was not one which they intended to support, their conversation extended over this race also, and Euphrates finished up the day by being beaten in the last race. It was not a good day for Cottington ; but, as Delia remarked, they had won a bit over old Huntsman, and could not complain ; and Dash felt that he had enjoyed himself very much indeed, and greatly preferred the company of Delia on the lawn to the howl of the bookmakers in the betting-ring.

"Shall I come to-morrow, Delia ?" asked Dash.

"Why, of course ! Mary Seaton is in the Windsor Castle Stakes, and she is as good as Osiris, and better than Phaeton. I want you to *bet* to-

morrow—only on that one race ; and we will have a good time for the rest of the day.”

“Very well, darling, I will come if I possibly can, and I am nearly certain to be able to ; but if I find that I cannot get away, I will back Mary in town.”

And, having taken leave of Delia and Sir Robert, Dash joined Mr. Twitterton, who was exchanging a few farewell words with Mrs. Baines ; and the two barristers hurried away to the railway station, and took their places in the train.

On their return to London they called at the Temple, although it was late, just to see whether any briefs had come in during the day ; and to his disappointment, there was work for Dash on the morrow, for he found on his table a large bundle of papers, with a note from his clerk to say that he had made an appointment for a consultation at four-thirty.

“Damn it !” cried Dash. “Look at this, Twitterton !”

“Well, my dear boy, and what about it ?”

“Why, here has Valpy gone and made an appointment for me to-morrow, and I want to go to Ascot !”

“You ought to be jolly glad to get it,” said Twitterton ; “this is the result of your being so well reported in the newspapers this morning ; don’t be an ass, man ! there will be plenty more

racing, but now you have got your foot on the ladder it is your business to climb."

"Of course you are right, old fellow, but I own it is rather a disappointment; still, I am very glad to get a case."

"Why are you so anxious to go to Ascot to-morrow, have not you had enough of racing? Or is it those bright eyes that we saw there?"

Dash laughed. "It is a little of both," he said. "I should like to see Miss Ashingdon—I may as well tell you that I am going to marry her when I have money enough, and also——"

"Never mind the also, my dear fellow, the first reason is quite sufficient! I always said you were a lucky dog, and now I think so all the more—I congratulate you, old man!" and Mr. Twitterton shook Dash's hand heartily.

"Thanks, my dear chap, thanks," said Dash. "But I may as well tell you the other reason. John Straight has a two-year-old running to-morrow that I wanted to back."

"Well, back it in London, and I will have ten on it as well; but don't think of neglecting your profession. Now come and dine with me at the Café Royal, and we will do ourselves well."

"Right you are!" cried Dash; and within half an hour the two friends were settling down to a dinner which would not have displeased Lucullus, and when they had paid proper attention to it,

Dash opened his heart to Twitterton and told him of the betting campaign upon which he had embarked in partnership with Delia, and how he had already won a large sum of money and hoped to win much more.

Mr. Twitterton was naturally astonished, but he did not offer any remonstrance, except to urge Dash to keep his head and to act with proper caution; and at length it was decided that Dash was to put five hundred pounds on Mary Seaton, and that Mr. Twitterton would enlarge his original participation, to the extent of making his share twenty-five pounds.

CHAPTER XX.

SAM PLAYER BRINGS NEWS.

ASCOT and its glories for that year had passed in to the realms of history. John Straight had done as much as he expected—Osiris and Phaeton had won their races, and Mary Seaton had vindicated the high opinion that her trainer had formed of her merits by taking the Windsor Castle Stakes to Cottington, much to the advantage of Dash and Delia; and old Huntsman had picked up a race, as usual.

John had had a quiet time since then, and he was sitting in his cosy dining-room one Saturday evening at the end of June, sipping a glass of port wine, with Sam Player opposite him, engaged in a similar manner with the claret.

"I saw my brother at Sandown to-day," said Sam, who had been riding at that meeting.

"Oh, indeed; and what did you hear from him?" asked John.

"Well, he told me something about that filly in Dick Jodrell's stable that you were talking

about when Tom Gatling and Mr. Fynes were here ; the Fortuna filly."

"What did he tell you about her ?" asked John, with suddenly-awakened interest.

"Why, he says she is broken all right, and is about half fit ; and they took her up to Newcastle last week and ran her in a mile race, just for an airing."

"What was the good of doing that ? Why did they take all that trouble ?"

"Well, perhaps they think that they are not so particular up in the North, and she ran so well that she might have won if she had been asked."

"Oh ! I see."

"And my brother says that he hears that they are going to enter her in a selling-race at Alexandra Park next week, and do a starting-price job. He says she is a real good filly ; but of course she is not half fit, as I say."

"And then, I suppose," said John, "they intend to buy her in ?"

"Yes, that is the idea. They are short of money in that stable, and must do something to get a bit ; and this filly is a great deal better than anything she is likely to meet at the Palace, so they expect to have a pretty good thing."

"Sam, I must have a finger in this pie !"

"I thought, from what you said, that you would have a try to upset their apple cart."

"Try ! I'll do it ! Hamilton Rolfe is not going

to take liberties with me for nothing : whose name did she run in ? ”

“ Beale’s.”

“ Do you know which race they are going to put her in ? ”

“ The mile selling race on Saturday.”

“ Very well ! I’ll put one in and claim her if she gets beaten, and I will buy her at auction if she wins. They will not be able to go very high for her if they are short of money.”

“ Could you not put one in to beat her ? She’s only half fit, you know.”

“ The very thing ! Sir Robert made me a present of Agulhas after Ascot ; I will put him in. He ought to be good enough to beat her, for she cannot be anything like ready yet.”

“ I should put in two, if I were you, and try to get first and second, so as to get first claim. If you don’t, they may get someone else to claim her if she gets beat.”

“ Which do you think would do to get second with ? ”

“ Well, either old Balham or La Carmagnole.”

“ I don’t suppose Sir Robert would mind, just for once ; although he does not like running his horses in selling races as a rule.”

“ You could work it all right with him,” remarked Sam, “ if you tell him you are particularly anxious to win this race.”

"I should not mind telling him why," said John Straight; "and what's more, I will tell him!"

"That is the best plan," said Sam, sagely.

"I shall tell him all about the Fortuna filly, and why I failed to buy her for him, and what a blackguard that Hamilton Rolfe is."

"That's right; but I expect he will want to have a go at Rolfe himself; he's an old 'un, but a bold 'un, as the song says," remarked the jockey.

"I shall tell him that I want to get this filly for a friend of mine. Sir Robert does not want her himself, and was never particularly keen to have her, only he did not like to disappoint me, and he is sure to agree to anything I want."

"But if Dick Jodrell and Whispers get to know that you are going for the race, they won't run their filly; for what they want is a good thing, and it would be no good thing to run up against Agulhas and Balham or La Carmagnole."

"I shall have to fight them with their own weapons!" responded John.

"How do you mean?"

"Well, if I have it put on the card that the two I run will be sold after the race, win or lose, and if there is no money in the market for either of them, people might get the idea into their heads that they are neither of them any good, and that it is only to get rid of them that they are there."

"That sounds reasonable enough."

"Besides," said John, "I don't think I am considered very dangerous in selling races; you see we so seldom run a horse in one, and when we do, we don't bet, so there seems to be an idea that I don't know what is wanted for that kind of race."

"That's quite true—people think you are no judge of platers."

"That's because I don't go in for them; but I know that I can win that race if I want, and I do want!"

"Well, then, sir; which is it to be—Balham or La Carmagnole?"

"Which do you think, Sam?"

"I think Balham, because he is an old horse; and I should put his legs in cotton wool bandages right up to the start, so that they may think that they are dicky."

"I shall walk over to Oakwood to-morrow afternoon and see Sir Robert and get his consent, and then we will teach Mr. Hamilton Rolfe a lesson;" and old John struck the table fiercely.

The next day Mr. Straight started off over the downs with his fox-terrier, "Vic," on the seven mile tramp to Oakwood. It was a long walk for a man of his age, but he was as strong and vigorous as many men of thirty, and he had a strict rule against taking out a carriage on Sunday, except in cases of necessity.

And so he ascended the steep downs manfully, and reached Oakwood at about four o'clock.

Sir Robert was at home, and very pleased to see his trainer; but when he had heard the story of Hamilton Rolfe's treachery, he was beside himself with anger.

"Why did you not tell me this before, John? I will never speak to the scoundrel again!"

"I thought that if I told you, it might just prevent my getting even with him; as you would be sure to let him know what you thought of him, and that would put him on his guard."

"Well, I am glad to say that I shall not have any opportunity of telling him what I think of him until after you have carried out your scheme; and I sincerely hope you will succeed. You can do what you like about Balham or the other, for I don't really want to keep either."

"Very many thanks, Sir Robert," said John Straight.

"And now, if you are fresh enough, after your long walk, we might go and have a look at the Stud Farm. I will drive you back to Cottington later."

"Very good," said John, who was not at all averse to having a lift home, for his scruples against using horses on Sunday only extended to his own stable.

They strolled down the avenue of chestnut trees

and met Delia coming in from a walk, and she joined them in their excursion to see the mares and foals.

The Stud Farm was about a quarter of a mile from the house, and consisted of a comfortable homestead standing close to the road in the midst of a large garden, and with paddocks on either side fenced with high and stiff wooden rails; then, in the rear there were two rows of boxes built of wood and tarred, and farther away a group of stallion boxes.

In the paddocks the mares were feeding on the rich grass in the shade of the lofty elm trees, and their large-limbed foals galloped about and raced together to their hearts' content.

There was a colt foal, the brother to Samoa, and the very image of him, and Sir Robert was very proud of this one.

Then there was a sister to Helvellyn and a half-sister to Phantom City, besides brothers and sisters to the crack two-year-olds, so that the running blood did not look in any danger of being lost.

All the mares were big, roomy animals, for Sir Robert would not breed from a little one, however good she might herself have been; and the consequence of this was that the foals all had plenty of bone and substance.

When they had inspected the stallions, of which there were two, Tahiti, the sire of Samoa, and

Shadowland, the father of Phantom City, the stud groom wanted to ask some questions of Sir Robert concerning the management of the farm, and so Delia was left alone with the trainer.

"Well, Miss Delia, and how is Mr. Fynes?" asked John.

"Oh, Dash is very well—he says he has had a good many cases brought to him since he appeared in that libel. Oh, Mr. Straight, I am so proud of him!"

"So you ought to be. He is a fine young fellow; but what I want you to do is to write to him and tell him to go to Alexandra Park next Saturday, without fail; as I want to see him there particularly."

"Alexandra Park! Why, I did not know that you ever went there?" said Delia, interrogatively.

"I don't, as a rule; but I am going there this time."

"What is it for?" asked Delia. "Is he to back anything there?"

"No, I don't expect so; but we have other fish to fry besides backing horses. I suppose your young Dash told you about Hamilton Rolfe buying the filly that I wanted for Sir Robert?"

"Yes. I wish you could pay the beast out!"

"Well, my dear, that is just what we are going to do. Rolfe is going to run the filly at Alexandra Park, and we are going; first to beat her, and then to claim her."

"Oh, Mr. Straight, how splendid! How I wish I could be there!"

"I wish you could, my dear; but I will call in here on my way home after the races and tell you what has happened."

"But why do you want Dash to be there?" asked Delia.

"Because I want to buy the filly for him, and I should like him to see her first."

"Is Dash going to own horses, then?" asked Delia, excitedly.

"Yes; I think he might do well with this one, and that's why I am going to get her for him."

"Oh, what fun it will be! I must be there to see it. Could you not manage to take me?"

"How can I take you? Sir Robert would be furious at your going there; and rightly too, alone!"

"I shall go there all the same," said Delia, with determination; "and if you won't look after me, I must look after myself."

"I shall tell Sir Robert what you say," said John.

"You would not be such a sneak!" replied Delia.

"No, I would not; but I do hope you will not go. It is no place for you."

"I shall, though!" she said.

Further conversation on this topic was stopped by the return of Sir Robert, so Mr. Straight was

obliged to allow Delia to have the last word ; a thing which all women love.

"Will you stop and have some supper with us, John?" asked Sir Robert. "The drive will be much more pleasant in the moonlight."

"Oh, yes ; do stay !" chimed in Delia.

"Well, I have nothing particular to take me home now, as the horses will all be done up for the night by the time I get back, anyhow ; so I shall be very glad to stay."

And so John stayed to supper, and Sir Robert drove him home in the evening in the four-wheel dog-cart, with Delia snugly wrapped in a rug on the back seat and Vic on her lap. There was a brilliant full moon which lighted up hill and dale with its mystic, dreamy radiance, throwing bars of black shadow from the trees across the gleaming chalk-white road, and making the dew on the branches glitter like strings of diamonds.

Along the moss-grown oak palings of Wellesley Park the bald-headed coots roosted in a solemn row, and they ruffled their feathers and gave shrill cries as the trap rattled by ; and then they passed through the sleeping village of Cottington, and on to where the lighted windows of the trainer's house flashed a cheerful welcome and a suggestion of humanity, in striking contrast to the great weird solitude of the silver downs which lay behind.

CHAPTER XXL

A SELLING-RACE.

As she drove home beside her father, Delia was excogitating a plan which should enable her to go to Alexandra Park on the following Saturday, and when she had settled upon a workable scheme, she said slyly,

"Dad, I think I shall run up to London one day this week, and see Mrs. Vasher Baines. I want to do some shopping, and she asked me to come and spend a day with her."

"Very well, my dear," said Sir Robert; "you can go any day you like."

"I will write to Mrs. Baines and fix a day with her, then," replied Delia.

And so the next morning she wrote to Mrs. Baines and told her that she wanted to go to Alexandra Park races, and asked whether Mrs. Baines would go with her. "Of course," she added, in a post-script, "I could not go alone, but with you chaperoning me it would be all right."

In a couple of days an answer came saying that

Mrs. Baines would be charmed to take Delia, and promising to meet her train at Vauxhall, when they could do some shopping in Oxford Street and then drive down in the carriage to the races. The rest of the week Delia was on the thorns of expectation, until Saturday, when she took an early train from Beistone, and was met by Mrs. Baines as arranged.

Delia had decided to confide her love affair with Dash to her friend, as she had to give some excuse for her anxiety to go to the races ; and she thought that she could safely trust Mrs. Baines to keep her counsel.

And so, when the train reached Vauxhall, and the ladies, having duly kissed, had taken their seats in the open landau, Delia, with much show of confusion, told how she was secretly engaged to Dash, and how she could not tell her father, because Dash had not enough money to marry her yet, and she was afraid Sir Robert would not sanction the engagement ; and how Dash was becoming quite celebrated at the Bar, and many other things about him ; finishing up by saying that he was to be at the races, and that that was why she wished to go there.

“ You dear, sweet, naughty girl ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Baines, when she had heard the story. “ I always thought there was something between you two ! But you may rely upon me to help you in

every way. You must come to London and stay a fortnight with me, and we will have Mr. Fynes to dinner every day, if he likes to come."

"Oh, thank you, kind Mrs. Baines; that will be ever so delightful!"

And so it was arranged that Delia was to be invited to stay in London very soon.

After visiting several of the large shops in Oxford Street, which are so beloved of the fair, they started for Alexandra Park, and their carriage having been pulled up in a spot on the rails close to the winning post, the ladies crossed over to the club enclosure.

Here, as good luck had ordained it, they met Dashwood Fynes at the gate; and after he had expressed his delight and surprise at seeing them, he proposed luncheon, which they accepted gladly, and all went into the Club luncheon-room to lay a good foundation for the day's work.

When they had finished, Dash made an excuse for leaving the ladies, as he wanted to see John Straight, so he found them a comfortable seat in the sunshine, and promised to return in a few minutes.

They had not sat there long, looking at the people hurrying about the course, and laughing at the efforts which a rotund youth, squeezed into a jockey cap and racing jacket, was making to sell his tips, when they were joined by Hamilton Rolfe.

"How are you, Mrs. Baines? Good morning, Miss Ashingdon; it must be something very important which brings you here?"

"Oh, no," replied Mrs. Baines, coldly, for she did not like Rolfe. "It was such a lovely day, that Miss Ashingdon and I decided to drive down here, just on the spur of the moment."

"Indeed?" said Rolfe, showing his white teeth in a smile of incredulity. "But I see that there are two horses from the Cottington stable entered in the same race—surely that may have something to do with your being here, Miss Ashingdon?"

"Not the least bit in the world," answered Delia; "except that I shall be glad to see the last of them. I suppose you noticed that they were both to be sold after the race?"

"Yes, I saw that; but I expect you hope to win the race with one of them first?"

"The others will have to be pretty bad, for one of ours to win!" replied Delia. "Old Agulhas is as slow as a man in boots, and that is why my father gave him away; and Balham was only sent here because we want to get rid of him," and she looked at Rolfe with such a simple, open expression in her clear eyes that no suspicion that she was misleading him entered his head.

"I am afraid they will not fetch much of a price, then," he answered; "there is not much demand for used-up platers."

"It is better to get rid of useless horses at any price, than to keep them," said Delia ; "but perhaps you can tell me what will win that race? The others seem pretty bad, too—Lamplighter, Quicksilver, Conningtower, Carlyle, Domesday—I don't think any of those are very good ; but what about the filly by Peasant out of Fortuna? Has she ever done anything?" she inquired in the most innocent way.

"Oh, yes," chimed in Mrs. Baines ; "what about her? I like the name, and I shall advise Mr. Fynes to back that one."

"You had better not!" exclaimed Rolfe ; "she is rotten bad. She ran at Newcastle the other day, and finished nowhere."

"Oh, well then, she's no good ; but I expect she is as good as ours," said Delia.

"You will have to look farther than either for the winner, I expect," said Rolfe. "I fancy Lamplighter, myself."

At that moment Dash came back, and Rolfe moved away and went in search of Whispers and Jodrell to impart to those worthies the pleasant information that they had no danger to fear from the Cottington horses, and to send off a wire to a trusty confederate in London with the key-word which was to authorise him to work a starting-price commission all over the country in favour of the Fortuna filly.

When Dash sat down beside the ladies, the numbers were up for the first race, but he had no intention of betting ; so he listened with amusement to the story of how Rolfe had been trying to pump Delia about what she knew of the horses, and how he had failed to get correct information.

"Still," said Dash, "I am sorry you had to tell him what was not true."

"I did not tell him what was not true!" exclaimed Delia, "I prevaricated. I was not going to tell him I thought one of ours would win ; and besides, if either does win, I don't know which it will be."

"Well, I think Delia was quite right," put in Mrs. Baines. "But I think you two had better go and take a walk in the paddock together. I am rather tired, and shall sit here and see the first race."

The suggestion commended itself to both Delia and Dash, so they found way to the paddock, and soon came upon John Straight with his horses, and Sam Player with him,

He had adopted the suggestion of Sam Player, and old Balham was walking round with enormous bandages on his forelegs, out of which masses of cotton-wool protruded. He was followed by Agulhas, who, never a very taking horse in his slow paces, was walking listlessly behind as if he had

made up his mind that he would do nothing to induce anyone to fancy him.

"So you don't mean to object on the ground of ownership?" asked Sam.

"No; I hate objecting unless I am obliged to do so. But we will have a good try to beat them."

"Good morning, Mr. Straight," cried Delia; "you see I have got here, after all!"

"So I see," said the trainer; "but you are in good hands, I notice," smiling at Dash.

"Do you think we shall beat the Fortuna filly?" asked Delia.

"No," replied John, "I don't."

"You don't? after all the trouble which you have taken. What has made you change your mind?"

"Look there!" said John, "that is the filly over in that far corner."

"Well, what about it?" asked Delia again.

"Why," replied John, "when I came out I expected to see a half-trained filly, and I never had any idea that they could have got her so straight in the time they have had her. That mare is almost fit, and she is good-looking enough to win anything."

They went nearer to the mare, and sure enough Jodrell had worked wonders with her. She had grown and thickened marvellously. She was a filly of enormous power, standing over sixteen

hands, and very lengthy ; and, as John said, she showed that she had done a lot of work and had thriven on it.

"Fancy putting a mare like that in a selling race !" exclaimed John, "they must be very hard up to risk her ; but I suppose they will back her for a pot of money, so that they will be able to buy her in, whatever she fetches."

"But we must buy her if she wins," said Delia ; "we won a lot of money at Ascot over Mary Seaton, and if she is worth their while to buy in, it is worth our while to out-bid them for her."

"Bravo !" said John. "Then will you let me use my discretion about buying her if she wins, Mr. Fynes ?"

"Yes, by all means ; I am quite in love with her," replied Dash.

"Somebody will be jealous if you talk like that, young man," laughed the trainer.

"Oh, no ; I am quite as much in love with her as Dash is ; we *must* have her !" cried Delia.

"Very well, then, we will," said John, decidedly. "But I must go to the weighing-room and weigh out my jockeys ; Sam Player rides Agulhas, and young Stowers is up on Balham, he gets the five pounds apprentices' allowance." And so saying, the old gentleman turned his steps to the weighing-room, and saw his riders safely through the scales.

The numbers were up for the third race, and the

betting in the ring was in full swing. Lamplighter was favourite at five to two; and at first a few bets were taken about the Fortuna filly at four to one, by people who had seen her in the paddock and had been impressed by her good looks, but there was no stable money in the ring for her, and as all her connections had been industriously decrying her chance throughout the day, she soon drifted out to ten to one; whilst there was a little public money for Balham at fives, on account of his popular ownership, and Agulhas had some backers at a point longer odds.

The ladies had gone over to their carriage to see the race, and Dash was with them there, and as the horses were started just in front of them, they had an excellent view of all that took place.

The seven other horses stood quietly enough, but it was quickly evident that the Fortuna filly did not like the starting gate, and she showed a decided disinclination to go up to it.

Jodrell, seeing this, went behind her with a big whip, and a lad got hold of her head and led her forward.

When she had joined her field, the machine flew up suddenly, and the race was started.

Jodrell cracked his whip behind his mare, but she ran out sideways, and nearly went over the rails among the carriages, and was only with great difficulty prevented by her jockey from doing this.

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As it was, she lost at least ten lengths before she could be got straight, and when she set off in pursuit of her field, they had reached the point where the course divides.

The horses went along the low ground, and as they rounded the first bend, old Balham, with Stowers riding to orders, was making strong running, with a lead of three lengths from Lamplighter, who was lying second. Then came Agulhas, going well, followed by Carlyle, Domesday, and the rest, with Fortuna still last, but having made up a great amount of lee way.

They passed out of sight of the carriages, and when they reappeared, Balham was still retaining his lead, with Agulhas on even terms with Lamplighter, and the Fortuna filly just behind the pair, and trying to pass on the rails.

This she failed to accomplish, as Lamplighter stuck close to the palings, so she drew back to come up on the other side, but it was too late; Agulhas had passed Lamplighter, and was second, whilst the latter, when they were opposite the stands, rolled across the course in front of Fortuna and further interfered with her, and although she eventually managed to get a clear opening, it was not until Balham had galloped past the post a winner, with Agulhas beating the filly a head for second place.

Delia was wild with excitement, and shouted

"Balham wins!" at the top of her voice; and Mrs. Baines, thinking that all this enthusiasm was on account of her father's colours being successful, joined Delia in her vociferations.

Dash jumped down and hurried to the weighing-room, in time to see the horses come in, and Stowers, pale with emotion (for it was his first winning mount), take his place in the balance and be passed "all right" by the clerk of the scales.

Hamilton Rolfe looked pea-green as he gazed at the strapping Fortuna filly whilst her jockey unsaddled her and hurried to weigh-in.

"I never saw such d——d ruddy luck in my life!" he muttered. "If it had not been for that cursed starting machine she would have won in a canter!"

"Better luck next time," remarked Dick Jodrell.

"Next time! How do you think I am going to hold on till next time? I tell you I had a hell of a lot of money on her, and a d——d sight more than I shall be able to pay!"

"Oh, you'll pull through somehow," said the trainer, consolingly; "and she will get all your money back for you another day, and a good lot more besides. But I am going to send her home as quick as I can."

Just then the clerk of the scales came to them, followed by Mr. Straight, carrying a paper in his hand.

"Mr. Jodrell," said the official, "your horse has been claimed."

"Claimed?" exclaimed Jodrell and Rolfe in one breath. "Who the deuce has claimed her?"

"I have, with Agulhas," quietly interposed Mr. Straight; "and here's the delivery order."

"That be d——d!" ejaculated Rolfe. "You are not going to claim our filly!"

"I am sure Mr. Straight will withdraw his claim, when he knows that we are particularly anxious to keep the filly," said Jodrell, politely.

"Indeed, I shall do nothing of the kind!" said John, stoutly. "Here is the order, and I will take the filly—here, Bamford, take charge of this mare. Buckle, you go with him, and put her in a box till you hear from me."

Bamford, a particularly strong and well-developed young fellow, who acted as travelling lad, took the bridle, and Teddy Buckle ranged up alongside of him.

"It is no use your arguing," said the clerk of the scales to Jodrell; "the mare is sold, and there is an end of it. As for you," he added, turning to Rolfe, "you have got nothing to do with it, and you had better clear out!"

Rolfe, seeing that he was helpless to save the filly, pocketed his anger as well as he could, and looked on in a dazed sort of way as Bamford led the filly away.

"She looks very much better than she did that

night at Feltham Hill, when you went to see her on your motor car," remarked John Straight to Rolfe, in a perfectly pleasant and courteous manner, as if nothing at all out of the common had occurred; "but how is Mr. Phillips, of Croydon? I wonder he did not come to see his mare run."

"Oh, you knew me; did you?" cried Rolfe, in a voice of passion; "and you came here on purpose to do this, I suppose?"

"Yes," said John; "I came here to beat you and to buy your filly if I could, and I am glad to say that I have succeeded."

"Well, all I can say is, it is a low, vile, mean, blackguardly trick!" shrieked Rolfe, beside himself with fury.

"I don't think you had better talk about blackguardliness," replied John; "but I have wasted too much time with you already," and he turned and went back to the sale-ring, where Balham was just being knocked down for three hundred and fifty guineas.

Then Agulhas was put up, and he fetched two hundred; so that, what with the one hundred and fifty which was the half of the surplus over the selling price of £50, due to Agulhas out of the price of Balham, the trainer had done pretty well.

At the ring side Mr. Straight met Delia and Dash, for he had particularly requested the latter not to accompany him when he claimed the filly,

so that Rolfe should have no suspicion that she was to become Dash's property ; and he then told them that he had secured the Fortuna filly, and that Rolfe was fit to bite nails over it ; " but now, he continued, " I will introduce you to Joe Tritton, for I think you had better send the filly to his place at Poledown to be trained. If you will go into the club refreshment room, I will bring him to you there, so that Rolfe shall not see us together."

Dash and Delia did as they were desired, and they were shortly joined by John Straight and his brother trainer, Joe Tritton, whom he formally introduced. Joe was a stout, good-looking man of middle age, with a clear complexion and black side whiskers, and his head was bald and venerable.

" Mr. Fynes is going to have the filly that I have just claimed, and I thought he might send her to you, Joe, if you could take her ? "

" I shall be delighted to take her, Mr. Fynes," replied Joe ; " she is a great fine filly, and looks like taking a good handicap later on."

" Yes, Joe," said John ; " you must have a shot at the Cambridgeshire."

" More unlikely things have happened," replied Joe ; " but it is a curious thing that I used to train the dam of this filly when I was living at Chantilly as private trainer to Baron de la Pelouse. Old Fortuna won a lot of races for us, and I don't see why her daughter should not do as well."

"That is settled, then," said Dash ; "I will leave entries and so on entirely to you, for I have no experience."

"And I suppose you will register an assumed name," put in John Straight, "so as not to have the judges asking you for tips in Court ?"

"Oh, yes ; I had not thought of the assumed name. Let's see, what shall I call myself ?"

"Call yourself ' Mr. Chambers,' " suggested Delia.

"Very well," assented Dash ; "I will be ' Mr. Chambers.' But now we will have a glass of wine to drink success to the Fortuna filly !"

The wine was quickly brought, and when the new purchase had been toasted, Dash and Delia said good-bye to the two trainers, and, having found Mrs. Vasher Baines, they went across to the carriage and told the coachman to get the horses, for Delia said that she wanted to catch the 5.5 train to Belstone, and Mrs. Baines was quite ready to leave.

On the way to London they were very merry, and arrangements were made for Dash to come to dinner several times when Delia came to visit Mrs. Baines ; and Dash, on his side, promised to take the ladies to the theatres and to sundry suppers at the Carlton and the Savoy.

At Waterloo Delia found Mr. Straight, who, having accomplished his purpose, had no further reason to stop at Alexandra Park, and she travelled back in the carriage with him, Dash seeing them off.

When they reached Belstone, Mr. Straight sent to the hotel stables for his dog-cart, which he had put up there, and drove Delia round to Oakwood, where Sir Robert was delighted to hear the story of Hamilton Rolfe's discomfiture, and when Delia told him that she had driven down with Mrs. Baines, and had witnessed the whole affair, he only said that he wished to goodness he had done so too.

CHAPTER XXII¹

MULEY EDRIS.

MULEY EDRIS was a pretty little old-fashioned creeper-covered cottage lying at the bottom of a long, narrow garden, where roses and peonies flourished exceedingly, and where the crazy path which threaded its zig-zag way to the front door, passed beneath many a rustic arch of crooked apple wood, overgrown with great masses of clematis and honeysuckle. It was close to the old public-house which bears the sign of the "Amato," and about half a mile from the railway station of Epsom Town.

The cottage itself was rough cast and white-washed, with beams showing in the plaster after the manner of the olden-time, and it was thatched with reeds.

It was the freehold property of Mr. William Beale, otherwise known as "Whispers," who had bought it some twenty years before, and had changed its name from Jessamine Dell to Muley Edris, in honour of a horse of that name whose one claim

to be remembered was that he had once turned upon a celebrated jockey on Newmarket Heath, and had savagely bitten his arm, thereby severely injuring him.

It had happened that the jockey just alluded to had contracted a habit of winning races on the most unlikely horses, and thus upsetting all calculations of public or private form, and seriously damaging Mr. Beale's reputation as a prophet; and so, when the latter learned of the injury to the jockey he immortalised the horse which had done it by naming his newly-acquired house after him, in token of grateful remembrance.

It was the Sunday morning following the meeting at Alexandra Park, and Mr. Beale was sitting in his little sanctum, through the wide-open window of which an inquisitive branch of Gloire de Dijon roses, heavy with fat cream-pink buds, had intruded, loading the air with their delicious fragrance.

Mr. Beale's table was littered with books of form and newspapers, with letters and telegrams from correspondents of various training quarters, and he was busily engaged in preparing his weekly letter to his clients, which should dimly foreshadow tips destined later on to take definite form and crystallise into "one horse paddock snips," from Salisbury, Pontefract, and Lingfield.

The weekly letters were very popular with young men in the city who had not any personal acquaint-

ance with the inside working of racing affairs, as they enabled their recipients to talk mysteriously about information which they expected to receive concerning the intentions of this or that stable ; and, in justice to Mr. Beale, it must be admitted that he really did work hard at his profession, was a good judge of public form, and had amongst his touts, or correspondents, as he preferred to call them, several very able and energetic horse watchers ; so that his opinion was, in truth, a valuable one, and owners and trainers themselves not infrequently consulted Whispers as to his estimation of the chances possessed by their animals.

He had completed his epistle to his satisfaction, and read the circular over before handing it to his wife to be placed upon a manifolding machine and posted to his numerous subscribers. The letter ran thus :—

“ Telegraphic Address,
“ ‘ Whispers,’
“ Epsom.

“ W. Beale,
“ Turf Correspondent,
“ Muley Edris,
“ Epsom.

“ DEAR SIR,—

“ I have pleasure in again congratulating myself upon the marvellous success which attended the issue of my last week’s wires, and to thank those of my clients who have forwarded handsome presents in recognition of the same.

"I trust that the week before us will be even more glorious than that which has just come to such a satisfactory and profitable conclusion by the victory of Balham at Alexandra Park.

"It will be in your recollection that I wired you 'Straight's selected' for that meeting, and so I am in a position to claim credit for having indicated the victory of Sir Robert Ashingdon's fine old horse.

"This, following upon several successes earlier in the week, entitles me to hold the premier honours in the world of vaticination. But let us look forward to the week which is before us.

"I have my eye upon several south country stables as likely to furnish dangerous candidates at Salisbury, but I will content myself for the present with indicating that the Hurstbourne and Champagne Stakes are threatened by two rods-in-pickle from the establishment of John Straight, at Cottington.

"I also know of a Yorkshire-trained candidate who I am assured will take a lot of beating at Pontefract; and I have one or two good things at Lingfield, but all these will be sent to the subscribers to my 'Paddock Snips,' so that I will conclude by strongly advising you not to miss 'Columbus' both ways, for the Lingfield Park Plate, for his connections have laid him out for the capture of this rich race.

"And so now, hoping to receive your orders for 'Paddock Snips' and special wires, at your earliest convenience,

"I have the honour to be, sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"W. BEALE."

"Yes," said Whispers to himself, "that ought to bring in a good many orders, and it does not tell them too much; and now I will take a little refreshment. Susan!"

Mrs. Beale, hearing her name called, quickly entered and inquired her lord's behest.

"Here, Susan, my gal, take this letter and send it off to the subscribers; have you got the envelopes addressed?"

"Yes, Bill; and I am all ready to manifold the letter."

"Very well, then; bring me the gin and a syphon. I am dry after my work!"

Mrs. Beale took the letter and quickly returned, bearing a tray upon which was a brown glass flagon with a silver-mounted cock and a silver label inscribed "Gin"; a syphon of seltzer water, a couple of tumblers, and an engraved glass barrel of biscuits with a plated lid and a coil of silver rope for a handle.

This was inscribed with the word "Biscuits," presumably lest its owner should mistake the pur-

pose for which it was intended, and use it as a tobacco jar.

Mr. Beale took the gin, and said,

“ ‘Ave a drop, Susan ? ”

“ Thank you, Bill, I will just take a sensation,” replied his better half.

And so two good helpings of the crystal spirit were poured out and filled up with sparkling seltzer water, and husband and wife sipped them with relish.

Presently the little gate at the end of the garden clicked, and a tall, dark man was seen coming along the meandering footpath towards the cottage.

“ Who can this be ? ” asked Mrs. Beale.

Whispers looked out, and said,

“ Why, it is Mr. Hamilton Rolfe, by Jingo ! ”

There was a loud, imperious ring at the front-door bell, and Mrs. Beale rose to answer it.

“ Is Mr. Beale at home ? ” asked Rolfe.

“ Yes, he is in his study ; will you step this way, please.” And the good lady showed Mr. Rolfe into the presence of her husband.

“ Good morning, sir,” said Whispers. “ I hope I see you well. Glad to see you—take a seat,” and he placed a chair for Rolfe, who sat down upon it and waited till Mrs. Beale had closed the door and her steps could be heard going down the passage.

“ Look here, Whispers, you’ve got me into a d——d nice sort of a hole ! ” began Rolfe.

"What do you mean? I don't understand you!"

"Oh, yes you do! You understand me well enough! What did you go and let that filly be claimed for? You ought to have arranged with the other owners not to claim."

"So I did, with some of them; but I could not do that with John Straight; besides, how was I to know that he would want to claim a horse out of a selling-race? You said he had only brought his two there to get rid of them."

"So I thought he had, but it turns out that he came there on purpose to oppose us; he had a spite against me because of my having bought the filly at Kempton."

"Why should he have a grudge about that?" asked Mr. Beale, incredulously.

"Because he wanted to buy her himself, only I got beforehand with him. It was because of him that I could not run her in my own name, and that is why I got you to enter her."

"Did he know she was for sale when you bought her?"

"Yes. That was how I heard of her. He wanted to buy her for Sir Robert Ashingdon, and I was present when he talked about her, so I jumped into a motor car and got in front of him, but I did not think he knew who had bought her."

"Whew!" whistled Mr. Beale. "You've run your head against a nice old snag! If I had known

you had been trying to beat old John Straight, I would not have had anything to do with this business. You might have been certain that you would come off second best ! ”

“ Well, I have had a devilish bad time,” went on Rolfe ; “ and I don’t know where to turn for money. I had twelve hundred on the filly, starting price, and I shall have to find that somehow, in the course of a day or two, not to mention the loss of the mare herself, through your blundering foolery.”

“ You can call it what you like, but I say that the mare would have been in Jodrell’s stable to-day, and no one would have thought of claiming her, if you had not been such a fool as to run up against Mr. Straight. I should have thought you would have known what they say of him : that he never forgets a kindness, and never forgives an injury ! ”

“ I tell you that I did not think he knew I had the filly ; and besides, how did he know, before the entries, that we were going to run her at the Palace ? Someone must have let that out.”

“ Oh,” said Mr. Beale, “ the boys will talk ; and there was no reason, as far as we knew, for Jodrell to make a secret about it. I expect he told people he was going to send her there to take her chance, after the wretched show she made at Newcastle. Nobody was likely to interfere with the market after that.”

"Well," said Rolfe, bitterly, "here I am, jolly well stumped out ! and I came here to see whether you could be of help to me."

"I don't see what I can do," considered Mr. Beale. "I might let you have a hundred pounds or so, but that would not help you much to pay twelve hundred."

"Oh, no, that would be a drop in the ocean ; but I have a little scheme which I thought you might get put through for me."

"Let's hear what it is," said Beale, "and I will see whether I can help you."

"You know all the ' boys ' on the race-course ? "

"Yes, I know a good lot of them. I pay them well when they get hold of any information which is worth having."

"Well, some of those chaps are very good at writing ! "

"I never noticed that any of them had any literary talent," answered Beale, complacently thinking of his own letters to his clients, which he regarded as triumphs of elegant diction.

"I don't mean in that way, Whispers," continued Rolfe, lowering his voice, "I mean that they are good at copying."

"Go on," said Whispers, guessing at what was coming, but restraining his indignation.

"Well, I have a cousin in India, Colonel Goring, and I know that he would lend me three thousand

pounds like a shot if he were in England. Now it happens that I had a letter from him a few days ago, asking me to sell out a thousand pounds of consols for him and pick up a useful race-horse and a couple of ponies with the money, and send them out to him. He encloses a power of attorney to sell the stock, and all I want is, to get hold of some chap who knows how to deal with paper so as to alter the word one in 'one thousand' into four. It ought to be easy enough, but I am such a shocking bad hand at writing that I am afraid it would be spotted if I did it."

"Then you want me to get a man to make the 'one thousand' into 'four thousand'?" asked Beale, very quietly.

"Yes," said Rolfe, "that is the idea. You see it will be only borrowing the money, and of course I shall pay it back before the colonel hears of it; here is the paper—you see it is very easily done. I will leave it with you."

"You will do nothing of the kind!" exclaimed Mr. Beale, rising from his chair in a towering passion. "How dare you come here and propose that I should commit a forgery! How dare you stand there and propose such a d——d piece of rascality! Get out of this house before I throw you out, you miserable, thieving blackguard!"

Rolfe looked for a moment as if he were going to put up his hands, but Beale went on,

"Don't you raise a hand to me ! I'll knock the stuffing out of you for two pins ! Get out of this room, I say !"

At this moment Mrs. Beale, alarmed at the sound of her husband's voice, opened the door and looked into the room.

Rolfe was standing by the mantel-piece, biting his lip and looking very white, while Whispers, flushed with passion, was waving a large and useful-looking fist in his face.

"What is the matter, Bill ?" inquired the lady.

"Matter !" cried Bill, "why this dirty scoundrel here has come down to ask me to commit a forgery for him that he has not got the nerve to do for himself ! Open the front door, Susan, we'll have him out of this !"

Mrs. Beale obeyed, and Whispers turned again to Rolfe.

"Now, you hound ! Out you go, and never dare to darken my doors again, you scoundrel !"

"D—— your eyes !" said Rolfe. "You need not think I want to stop in this pig-sty," and he shuffled out of the door.

"Pig-sty or not, it belongs to an honest man !" bellowed Whispers after him, shaking his fist at the retreating figure.

"Come along in, Bill," begged Mrs. Beale. "You don't want to dirty your tongue, speaking to such cattle as that !"

"No, more I don't, lass; but in all the years I have lived in this place, nobody has ever had the cheek to ask me to do a trick of that sort!"

"Never mind him, Bill; have a steadier and forget the swine!" and the loving wife poured out a soothing draught and held it to her fuming husband's lips.

CHAPTER XXIII.

KISSES.

MRS. VASHER BAINES was a very charming widow. She had been married at the age of twenty to Mr. Baines, who had amassed a large fortune on the Stock Exchange, in conjunction with an enlarged liver and a disposition to podagric attacks. His enjoyment of wedded bliss, from the last two causes, had only endured for four years, and Mrs. Baines, who was now thirty, had survived him six years in comfortable widowhood.

She lived in a beautiful little house in Chester Square, in the possession of every luxury that money could buy, except a husband ; and, although she had had many offers of re-marriage from men who seemed in every way eligible, she had steadfastly refused them all.

She was distinctly a pretty woman and she knew it, and took good care that no laches on her part should militate against the proper presentment of her charms.

Her cheeks were soft and pink, with that rose-

leaf tint which mere man feels sure is due to cosmetics, skilfully applied, but cannot for the life of him make out how it is done, and whose province it is not closely to inquire, so long as the effect is pleasing.

Her eyes were large and lustrous, with heavy lids of a delicate bluish shade, and her teeth were regular and little.

She was always faultlessly dressed, and, considering the desirability of her person and her fortune, it is not to be wondered at that the men ran after her.

It was in the middle of July, about a fortnight after the day at Alexandra Park, that Delia came up from Belstone to stay with Mrs. Baines at Chester Square, and in the evening they were engaged to go to the Gaiety Theatre, where Dash had taken a box, and to supper at the Carlton afterwards.

The two ladies spent the afternoon after the manner of their kind, in calling on various uninteresting people, and drinking countless tiny cups of tea, and when they had gone home and dressed they sat down to a frugal meal of soup, sole-au-vin-blanc, and a sweetbread; for Mrs. Baines averred that she never could eat any dinner before going to a theatre, as the early hour at which the plays began left no time for digestion.

At the theatre they were met by Dashwood

Fynes and Mr. Twitterton, the latter gentleman sporting a large bunch of tuberose in his button-hole, and they were soon seated in their box and laughing at the play.

Delia and Dash roared at every sally, and added whispered amendments of their own to every joke ; but poor Mr. Twitterton, gazing upon the fair white ample roundness of Mrs. Baines' bust, seemed, for the first time in his life, to have lost the power of speech.

" You don't seem to be taking any interest in the play, Mr. Twitterton," suggested Mrs. Baines. " I hope you are not bored ! "

" Oh, no, my dear Mrs. Baines ; but I was thinking what a wretched thing life is, at the best. There are these actors and actresses, pretending to be in love to amuse the public, and earning a living by it, when perhaps there are hearts somewhere breaking in reality for the love of them ! "

" How sentimental you are, Mr. Twitterton ; but I suppose you have often been in love, or at any rate known that women were in love with you ? "

Mr. Twitterton looked sheepish.

" I don't believe I have ever really been in love till to-day," he answered ; " and I am sure no one has ever been in love with me."

" Oh, indeed ! I ought not to ask what fair client stole your heart to-day ; but I shall look

at the *Times* in the morning to see what cases you have been engaged in."

"You are welcome to do that, but I am afraid you will not get much information from that quarter."

"Where shall I look, then?" asked Mrs. Baines, archly.

"In the looking-glass!" said Mr. Twitterton, desperately.

"Oh, you dear, complimentary man!" cried the lady. "I think that is a very pretty speech."

Twitterton could not make a reply, for the white shoulders were driving him mad, so he grinned foolishly, and felt a supreme contempt for himself.

Why, thought he, could he not be brilliant and say the thing that was in his heart straight to the heart of the lady?

But the words would not come.

Presently Mrs. Baines perceived the perfume of Mr. Twitterton's tuberoses, and turned to him.

"Oh, how sweet your flowers are! I do so love the scent of tuberoses! Do let me smell them!"

Twitterton took the flowers out of his button-hole and offered them to Mrs. Baines, much to the amusement and delight of Delia, who had not missed a detail of the scene.

Mrs. Baines held them to her pretty nose and inhaled the odour, closing her eyes the while.

"Oh!" she said, at length, "it is heaven! It is the land of long ago, it is the future and the past; it is love!" And her blue eyelids opened languidly to let a dreamy glance fall on poor Twit-terton, who had no armour to withstand such an attack.

"Will you wear them?" he faltered, at length.

"Yes; see, I will put them here, near my heart," answered Mrs. Baines, placing the flowers in her dress, and destroying the barrister with a witching smile.

"It is very wonderful," at length remarked Twit-terton.

"Yes? What is very wonderful?" asked Mrs Baines.

"I was thinking how wonderful it is that a man can go through all his life without ever seeing a woman who really interests him, and then, all of a sudden he will meet with one who instantly fills his heart, although most likely she does not know it, and will forget all about him the next day."

"I think, with all deference to your superior knowledge, that you are quite wrong about that," replied the widow; "people, in this world, attract or repel one another mutually, and women can feel the attraction or repulsion as well as men."

"Yes, very likely; but I don't suppose women care."

"That shows me that you know nothing about women, and have no right to talk about them."

"I was only thinking how much a man can be helped by a woman, if he finds the right one," answered Mr. Twitterton, regaining his courage.

"I suppose it is his own fault if he does not find the right one; it is his own affair to ask for the right one, and see that he gets her, and refuse all spurious imitations!"

"Well, it never occurred to me till to-day that I must ask for the right one; but if I get her I shall go far!"

"What will you do to go farther than you have already gone, Mr. Twitterton; you have a very good practice, and I suppose you will become a K.C. very soon?"

"Yes, yes, I shall apply for silk in a year or two; but I was thinking of parliamentary work. I would stand for a constituency and devote myself to politics, if I found a woman who would take an interest in it all with me."

"Well, don't look so depressed, Mr. Twitterton. If I can help you to find the woman, I will do all I can for you."

"Either you are a flirt, or you know who I mean now!" cried Mr. Twitterton, desperately.

"I am not a flirt, and I think I know who you mean," replied Mrs. Baines, quietly, her beautiful

bust heaving as she spoke ; “ so come and talk it over with me to-morrow afternoon.”

Twitterton was in a state of ecstasy ; he did not yet feel certain whether Mrs. Baines realised that he was in dead earnest, but he resolved to call on her the next day and put the matter beyond a doubt.

But while Mr. Twitterton had been talking to Mrs. Baines the play had come to an end, and the curtain fell upon the last scene.

Then our friends drove to the Carlton and had supper ; and Mr. Twitterton, overflowing with jokes and high spirits, was the life and soul of the party.

When they had seen the ladies into their carriage, the two barristers walked down Pall Mall together, and Twitterton remarked,

“ Mrs. Baines is a very beautiful woman, Fynes ! ”

“ Yes,” said Dash ; “ and a real good sort, too ! ”

“ Do you know, Fynes old man, if I could be on the same terms with her that you are with Miss Ashingdon, I should be the happiest man in the world ! ”

“ Well,” said Dash, “ I don’t know how much more you want, but I should have thought you were getting on pretty well this evening.”

“ Did you think so ? Did you think so, really ? If I could only win her, I would make a name that would be worthy of her ! ”

“ I fancy your chance very much, as the racing

fellows say," answered Dash; "but I must say good night, my rooms are in Chapel Place."

"Good night, then," replied Mr. Twitterton, as he went to his own flat to dream of the charms of Mrs. Vasher Baines.

The next day, soon after four o'clock, Mr. Twitterton told Dash that he was going down to Chester Square to call on Mrs. Baines; but Dash was unable to accompany him, as he had work to do which would keep him at chambers until six o'clock.

Mrs. Baines had given orders that Mr. Twitterton was to be shown into the boudoir if he called, for she did not want the *tête-à-tête* which she had determined to accord him, interrupted by the advent of visitors, and so Delia was left in the drawing-room to receive anyone who might call, and to say that Mrs. Baines would be there in a few minutes.

At half-past four the footman told Mrs. Baines that Mr. Twitterton was in the boudoir, and she went down to him, radiant in soft dreamy silks which fluttered loosely about her.

She held out her hand and he took it in his own, and seemed in no hurry to let it go, but she did not withdraw it.

"Sit down here, by me," she said, at last, and seated herself on a luxuriously-padded sofa, a little too big for two and a little too small for three.

Twitterton took his place beside her.

"I have been thinking a great deal about you, lately," he said.

"Really? I hope you thought nice things about me, then," said Mrs. Baines.

"I have come here to tell you my thoughts! I have seen a good deal of you now, and I find that I cannot go on like this. I may as well say it—I love you! I cannot look at you without a thrill! I cannot hear your voice without a tremor. Scents that remind me of you intoxicate me, sounds that recall your voice set me dreaming! What am I to do? I love you! I love you!"

Mrs. Baines looked at him with the soft, sensuous, wonderfully alluring expression that her violet eyes sometimes conveyed, and smiled.

"What am I to do?" he cried again. "I love you! and I know that you are a beautiful woman, probably surrounded by men who say that to you every day; and I suppose it does not seem much to you—only what you have a right to expect! But it is death to me," and tears stood in poor Twitterton's eyes.

Mrs. Baines was not cruel, and she knew her own mind exactly. She would not keep this man on tenter-hooks. She opened her arms and said "Come!" and Twitterton somehow found himself folding the lady to his breast and covering her beautiful cheeks with his kisses.

"Oh, my darling!" he exclaimed. "Thank God! this is more than I deserve!"

While Mrs. Vasher Baines was engaged with Mr. Twitterton in the boudoir, Hamilton Rolfe called, and was shown into the drawing-room, where Delia was sitting alone. After a few common-place remarks, he drew his chair nearer to her, and said,

"I have never seen a girl who interested me as you do, Miss Ashingdon!"

"I am sure I don't know why I should interest you particularly," replied Delia; "you never interested me very much!"

"Don't be unkind! I suppose it is because you know that you are rich, and that I am not, that you won't look at me?"

"Riches never entered into the matter at all," said Delia, wishing that Mrs. Baines would come to her rescue.

"Well, then," pursued Rolfe, "you are not too young to understand what love is. I love you, and I mean to marry you!"

"Mr. Rolfe!" exclaimed Delia. "I have never given you the least right to insult me like this!"

"I don't mean to insult you, but I am determined that you shall be my wife! I have sworn it!" cried Rolfe.

"I am going!" said Delia, rising.

Rolfe sprung from his chair and seized Delia round the waist, attempting to kiss her.

"Let me go, you brute," said Delia, struggling violently, but afraid to cry out on account of the scene which would ensue.

"I love you ! promise to be my wife, and I will let you go !" whispered Rolfe.

"I would rather die !" screamed Delia. "Let me go."

"I swear I will not let you go till you have kissed me and promised to marry me," said Rolfe, beside himself.

Delia had been edging round towards the bell, and when it was within reach, she seized the handle and pulled it with all her might.

Rolfe did not see what she had done, so he redoubled his attempts to kiss her.

When she heard the sound of steps on the stairs, Delia suddenly left off struggling and sat down on the settee.

"Kiss me, if you want to !" she said, tauntingly. "I shall like the footman to see you doing it, for I hear him coming, and he will throw you out of the house if you don't go quietly."

And she held her face towards him aggravatingly, well-knowing that he dared not kiss her.

The footman opened the door and looked inquiringly for orders.

"The door for Mr. Rolfe !" said Delia, and turning to Rolfe, "Good afternoon, Mr. Rolfe ; I am afraid we shall not see you again for a long time."

"Good-bye, Miss Ashingdon," said Rolfe, and he tried to walk out of the room in the presence of the servant, as if nothing out of the ordinary course had occurred.

Delia rushed to her bed-room and burst into a torrent of tears.

She longed to see Dash, and to tell him all about it; but she knew that if Dash heard of Rolfe's conduct there would be a scene and a scandal, and she made up her mind to keep the matter from him, for she dreaded having her name mixed up as being the cause of Dash giving Rolfe a horse-whipping.

And so she waited till Mrs. Baines came up to her, with the news that she had accepted Mr. Twiterton's proposal of marriage; and then, after congratulating her friend, she fell on her neck, sobbing, and told her all about Hamilton Rolfe's conduct.

"Don't trouble yourself about that, my dearest Delia; we will tell the servants that we shall be 'not at home,' if he calls again. You were quite right to decide not to say anything to Dash about it, for I believe he would kill him. Pull yourself together, and cheer up! Mr. Twiterton has gone home to dress, and he is coming here to dinner, and, with him, Dash."

"Are you quite certain that I ought to say nothing to Dash about it?" asked Delia.

"Quite certain! It would upset everything if you did. If Dash smashed him up and it came out in the papers, everyone would know that you were bound to Dash, and then your father would have a word to say."

"Very well, dear Mrs. Baines, I will keep the horrible thing quiet until I am married to Dash, but then I will tell him; and I hope I shall be there when he horsewhips that cad Rolfe! But now I want water; lots of cold water with toilet vinegar in it to cool my eyes and wash my hands from the touch of that loathsome man! I feel contaminated by his touch. Look at my wrists where he held them?" and she showed the marks of Rolfe's fingers.

"Never mind, dear," said Mrs. Baines; "it will be all right after you have put your hands in the cold water."

CHAPTER XXIV.

RANELAGH.

"I DON'T see why you should call me 'Mrs. Baines,'" said that lady one day, when she was driving Delia down to Ranelagh, "I would like you to call me Laura."

"Very well, dear; I will call you Laura for the future," said Delia.

"That will be much nicer."

"Do you know, Laura," Delia went on, "I have never been to the Ranelagh Club—I am so looking forward to it!"

"I think you will enjoy yourself to-day; there will be tent-pegging and polo, and then some balloons will go up, and we shall see everyone we know there; and altogether it will be very jolly."

"Dash said he would be there at about five," remarked Delia.

"Yes, I know. John Twitterton is coming with him. Isn't it fun our being engaged to two friends—we can make them run after us in couples, like dear little dogs;" and Mrs. Baines laughed.

"I am so glad you accepted Mr. Twitterton, Laura, dear ; I saw he was in love with you some time ago, and I wondered when he would propose."

"Poor, dear man ; I don't believe he ever would have proposed if I had not helped him, but he is a duck, and I could not bear to see him looking so miserable."

"Of course," said Delia, "you will be able to marry when you like, but poor Dash and I will be obliged to wait until we get enough money to set up house-keeping on."

"I will tell you a secret, Delia, dear. Of course it ought not to be talked about yet, but John says he is going to apply for silk very soon, for he thinks it would be nice to be a King's Counsel before we are married ; so that that ought to help Dash on a bit."

"How will it help Dash ?" asked Delia. "Of course it will be very nice for Mr. Twitterton to take silk, but I don't see how it will benefit Dash."

"Well, then, that is just what I am going to tell you. You know that John has a very large practice as a junior."

"Yes, I know ; one of the largest, Dash says it is."

"Very well ; when John takes silk it is most likely that Dash will get nearly all his junior briefs ; John says that he can induce most of the solicitors who brief him to engage Dash as his junior."

"How delightful!" cried Delia, "then Dash really will get on! Oh, it is kind of Mr. Twiterton!"

"John says it will be much more convenient to him to have Dash in his cases than a stranger, because Dash was his pupil and always has had a room in his chambers, so that John knows the way he does his work."

"I am delighted! I cannot tell you how glad I am, Laura, and how kind I think it of Mr. Twiterton! But you have told me a secret, and I will tell you one in return."

"Oh, yes; tell me a secret, dear. I love secrets."

"You remember the day when we went to Alexandra Park races?"

"Of course I do; when Balham won."

"Yes; well, you remember there was a horse called the Fortuna filly that ran in the same race?"

"I remember; she got a very bad start and finished third."

"Well, after the race, Mr. Straight bought the Fortuna filly for Dash, and she is now being trained for him at a place called Poledown, near Gatherstone."

"What fun! exclaimed Mrs. Baines. "When is she going to run? We must go and see her win."

"Oh, she won't run till the end of October.

She is going to run in the Cambridgeshire, and her trainer thinks she is a very good filly, so perhaps we may win a lot of money."

"How exciting! We must manage to go to Newmarket and see the race," said Mrs. Baines.

The carriage stopped at the gates of the Ranelagh Club, and the gate-keeper, in a straw hat with a red ribbon, came forward and took the ladies' passes. "Right, coachman!" he said, and they drove through the shrubbery and round to the door of the fine old Club-house.

The hall and reception-rooms were filled with a throng of men in frock coats and patent boots, and ladies in all the most marvellous confections of Worth and Paquin, and Mrs. Baines guided Delia through the gay crowd and out on to the terrace at the back.

The scene was delightful; a band was playing under the trees, and all the world of fashion seemed to have congregated on the great mossy lawn. There were boats on the lake paddling up and down in the shade of immense cedars, much to the annoyance of a troop of black and white bernicle geese, who had been driven from the water by the rowers, and were holding an indignation meeting on an island, where they expressed their disapprobation by shrill hisses.

"Let us go and get good places for the gymkhana," said Mrs. Baines, and they wandered

away to the old Polo Ground, where already a great many people had assembled.

A number of drags were there, and as they crossed the road, Lord Thistleton drove up with his team of bays, with their sleek coats shining like satin in the sunshine.

Beautiful polo ponies were being led about by their grooms, and men in white breeches and brown boots were waiting to take part in the sports.

The ladies found some vacant chairs, and sat down to look on.

First there was tent-pegging, in which several Indian native princes took part, their brown complexions and great black eyes looking the darker in contrast with the brilliant colours of their magnificent turbans.

The pegs were placed in rows of four, along a strip of turf which looked like a miniature race-course, and the competitors rode four abreast, galloping the length of the course and picking-up the pegs on their lances as they passed.

After the tent-pegging came a game which was called pig-sticking; the pig being represented by a sack of wadding attached to a rope which a man on horseback held in his hand, trailing the pig behind him, and followed by the hunters, armed with spears and riding the cleverest polo ponies imaginable.

The man who trailed the pig galloped about the

course whilst the others pursued him and tried to stick the porker, but whenever a spear came dangerously close to the poor animal, a sudden jerk of the rope caused it to bound away, and its would-be assassin only speared the ground.

At last, after a most exciting chase, one of the Indians managed to drive his spear right through the pig and pin it to the earth. The man with the rope let go, and the hunters gathered round to witness the death struggles of the wadded sack.

There were other sports, and then a game of polo, which interested Delia immensely ; and Mr. Twitterton and Dash made their appearance just in time to see the three huge balloons go up and sail majestically away, with the aëronauts in the cars waving their hats in token of farewell.

Then they had tea on the lawn, and listened to the band until dinner time, when they repaired to the large dining-room in the garden, and had a capital dinner ; after which they sat on the terrace in basket chairs, and heard the vocalists who sang under the light of the Chinese lanterns, whilst coffee and liqueurs were brought, and Twitterton and Dash slowly smoked their cigars.

"Does John know about your race-horse ?" whispered Mrs. Baines to Delia.

"Yes ; Dash told him," said Delia.

"Very well. I shall talk about it, then, I do want to hear more about the filly."

So she turned to Dash, and said,

"Delia has let me into the secret about the Fortuna filly. What are you going to call her? I suppose you will give her a name?"

"Oh, yes," replied Dash; "let us all think of a name. What do you propose, Mrs. Baines?"

"What is the father's name?" asked the lady.

"Peasant," replied Dash.

"Well, I should call her 'Miss Fortune,'" said Mrs. Baines.

"Oh, no!" cried Delia; "that is a horrid name. What do you suggest, Mr. Twitterton?"

"How would 'Out of Luck' do?" asked Mr. Twitterton.

"It is just as bad as the other; we want to be in luck, not out of luck. Dash, you have a try."

"What do you think of 'Treasure Trove'?" That is the sort of thing a Peasant finds when he has fortune."

"I like that much better than the others," said Delia.

"Well, let us hear what you propose yourself, Delia," said Mrs. Baines.

"I know a good name for her, but I shall not give it to her till she has won the Cambridgeshire; she will remain the Fortuna filly till then, and she shall change her name when I do," and Delia looked roguishly at Dash.

"Then there will be a good deal of changing of

names amongst the ladies about that time. I don't think Baines is such a pretty name as Twitterton," said the bearer of the last mentioned patronymic.

"Be quiet, John!" said Mrs. Baines. "I shall go away with Delia and leave you men to enjoy each other's society, if you talk such nonsense."

"Beg pardon," said Mr. Twitterton; "but really Twitterton is an awfully pretty name. It sounds like love-birds twittering!"

"Donkeys!" cried Mrs. Baines, striking at her lover with a fan.

"I heard from Tritton about the filly to-day," remarked Dash; "he says that she is very well, and he likes her immensely; but he wants me to buy something to lead her in her work, so I have written to him to authorise him to spend three hundred pounds on a horse for that purpose."

"Three hundred seems a lot of money to give," said Mrs. Baines.

"Well, Tritton says that he must have something that can go a bit, as the horses he has got cannot get out of her way; and he thinks if he has any luck he will be able to buy a horse that can pick up a little race as well and so pay back his purchase money."

"Let us go for a quiet stroll round by the lake," said Mrs. Baines; "the water looks so pretty with the reflections of the lanterns on it."

"Oh, do let us!" chimed in Delia. "It will be lovely."

And so they paired off and walked by the side of the great cool brown sheet of water, and over the rustic bridge on the other side, and from the lighted distance, glittering with many coloured lanterns, came a woman's voice singing a passionate love-song.

"This is fairy-land!" whispered Delia.

Dash did not answer, but he held Delia's hand in his and they walked side-by-side, spell-bound by the magic of the place.

The song was drawing to a close, and the rich contralto throbbed across the water in a low, pleading cry, and died out into nothingness.

They went on in silence for some moments, and then Dash said, "Dearest, that song makes me sad. It makes me feel what sordid, worldly creatures we are, struggling for fame and money! I should like to give up everything—my profession and that hateful betting—and live on what we have got, in a tiny cottage by the Cornish sea!"

"You have put your hand to the plough!" said Delia.

"Oh, yes; I know, and I shall not turn back; but still, it seems to be waste of life to spend all the time that we might be passing in God's sunshine, cooped up in dusty chambers waiting for briefs come which so slowly!"

"You ought not to complain, Dash ; you have had a good many briefs lately."

"I don't complain, darling ; I think I have been very lucky lately, thanks to the advertisement that libel case gave me ; but still, I wish we could be married."

"Has Mr. Twitterton told you that he is going to take silk ?" asked Delia.

"No ! When did you hear that ?"

"Mrs. Baines told me to-day ; and she said that it would make a great difference to your prospects, Dash, dear."

"By Jingo !" exclaimed Dash. "I should think it would ! The only thing is, I wish I had had a few years more practice first. I don't know whether solicitors will send me big cases, at my age."

"Mrs. Baines said they would, and that Mr. Twitterton would tell them they were to," Delia replied.

"Well," said Dash, "if they send me a quarter of the work they have been sending to Twitterton it will mean a good bit over two thousand a year ! Why, if I were making that, I should not be afraid to go to your father and ask for you."

"And he would give me to you, Dash ; but still, capital is useful, and we must win the Cambridge-shire with Fortuna filly, so as to be quite independent."

"And then give up gambling !" said Dash.

"Yes; but keep a few mares and breed foals for dad to run. We will make him buy our yearlings!"

"Now then, you young people," called Mrs. Baines; "it is time we went home, come along!"

So they went back to the crowd and the lanterns; and having told the portly hall porter to call the carriage, they were soon all seated in the open landau and rolling along over Hammersmith Bridge on their way to Chester Square.

CHAPTER XXV.

"BERNCASTLER DOCTOR."

THE London season, with its whirl of gaiety, came to an end with the beginning of the Goodwood week, and there was a great exodus of the votaries of fashion to the Sussex downs.

Sir Robert and Delia stayed for the meeting with some friends, the Govetts, near Chichester ; but Dash, on account of the possibility of his being required at chambers, had to do the journey every day by train from London to Drayton, where he had a hansom waiting to carry him up to the race-course, and bring him back again in time to catch the special train to town.

The Cottington stable had won five races in the first three days, and Dash had backed each winner well, so that he was having a very good meeting.

It happened that, on the Friday, Dash was the only occupant of the railway carriage until he reached a junction a few miles from Gatherstone, and there, on the platform, he saw Joe Tritton,

also on his way to Goodwood, and beckoned to him to get in.

Joe quickly accepted the invitation, and seated himself opposite to Dash as the train moved on again.

"I am glad to have this opportunity of speaking to you, sir," said Tritton. "I wanted to have a chat about your filly."

"Oh, yes; how is she?" asked Dash.

"She is very well, and has grown and let down a good bit since I have had her. I looked about for a horse to lead her, and I found they wanted to sell old Berncastler Doctor out of Fenner's stable; or at any rate, they were willing to part with him at a price."

"How much do they want for him?" asked Dash.

"Three hundred and fifty pounds. That is with his engagement in a mile race at Brighton next week which looks almost at his mercy, and would bring £100 back, if he won it."

"I am quite willing to buy the horse, if you want him," said Dash.

"Well, sir, I do want him; for, as I told you in my letter, I have nothing in my stable to lead the filly. You see, I have not long been settled at Poledown, for I came back from France only two years ago, after the death of Baron de la Pelouse, for whom I was private trainer; and my employers, who have only two or three horses each, would

naturally not allow me to use them up in leading work for your mare. And, besides, I make it a rule not to mention the work that a horse belonging to one of my owners is doing, to any of the others, so that I could not ask anyone to assist in preparing your mare by letting me use his horse.”

“Of course not,” agreed Dash, “I quite feel that; and you had better buy Berncastler Doctor.”

“Very good, sir. I will see Fenner at Goodwood to-day, and tell him to send the horse over in the morning. His stable is only three miles from Pole-down.”

“And I will give you a cheque for £350 to pay him with,” said Dash.

“Thank you; any time will do for that. But there are one or two other things I wanted to see you about. Have you registered an assumed name yet? You see if Berncastler Doctor is to run next week for you, you ought to register your assumed name at once.”

“All right. I will go to Weatherby’s to-morrow, and do it. I am going to call myself ‘Mr. Chambers,’ as I told you.”

“Then there is an account to be opened at Weatherby’s; you will find it convenient to have an account there.”

“What for?” asked Dash. “I am quite ready to open an account there, but I want to know what good it is.”

"Well, if you have an account at Weatherby's, they pay your stakes when you run a horse, without the bother of your having to pay the entry at the scales ; and they receive your winnings for you when you win a race."

"I will attend to that to-morrow, then," said Dash ; "but here we are at Drayton. I can give you a lift, as I have got a hansom here."

And Dash led the way out of the station and about a hundred yards up the road, to where a smart London hansom, with a good-looking and blood-like bay mare between the shafts, and a sporting young cabby on the box, in a white hat and grey dust coat, with a bunch of geraniums in the buttonhole, was drawn up on the grass by the roadside, waiting for him.

"Jump in," said Dash.

Mr. Joe Tritton did as he was desired, and Dash followed him, and they set off along the pretty roads, now dusty, and full of traffic, towards the high chalk hills on the top of which is the celebrated Goodwood race-course.

They bowled along through the duke's park, and took matters steadily on the steep ascent which leads upward to the Birdless Grove, and watched the heavy omnibuses with their sweltering loads of humanity grinding laboriously up the precipitous incline, their weary cattle being assisted by trace-horses, mounted by swarthy gipsy lads, who, as

soon as they had helped one ponderous vehicle to the top, turned and galloped down the grassy slopes to hitch on to the next carriage whose driver was willing to enlist their services.

At length they reached the Grand Stand, and Tritton went to the Paddock, whilst Dash made his way to the lawn, in search of lunch and Delia.

He found Delia and Sir Robert seated at a table under the trees, with Mr. and Mrs. Govett, Mrs. Vasher Baines, and the rest of the Govetts' party, and he was soon engaged in stowing away prawns in aspic and pigeon pie at an alarming rate.

"Where are you going for the summer, Sir Robert?" asked Mrs. Baines.

"Oh, I am going to Aix-les-Bains with Lord Thistleton; we want a thorough wash and brush-up," answered the baronet; "but I don't know whether Delia will care for it."

"Why not let Delia come with me?" suggested Mrs. Baines. "I am going to North Berwick for a fortnight, and then on to St. Andrews."

"Delia can go if she likes. I think it would be a very good plan," said Sir Robert.

"I should love to go with Laura," said Delia.

"Very well then, that is settled. Thistleton and I start next Tuesday."

"I shall have to stop in London for another fortnight, and then I am going to Scotland with Twitterton," said Dash.

"What are you going to do after Doncaster, Dashwood?" asked Sir Robert.

"I have not made any plans so far ahead, Sir Robert," answered Dash.

"You had better come and stay with us at Oakwood, then, and help me kill the partridges," said the baronet, genially.

"Nothing I should like better!" answered Dash.

"Very well then, book that—the Monday after the St. Leger I shall hope to see you. But does Twitterton shoot? I should like him to come with you, if he would care to."

"I expect he would be delighted; I will ask him when I get back to town, and let you know."

This arrangement suited Delia extremely well, for she had not been looking forward with any pleasure to going to Aix-les-Bains with her father, and she determined that the particular spot in Scotland whither Dash and Twitterton should betake themselves, should be St. Andrews; and, a little later on, when she was alone with Dash in the paddock, she confided to Dash that she would like them to go to the old Scotch University city, and that she was going to ask Mrs. Baines to go to Oakwood afterwards, for the shooting, so that they might have a jolly party there.

Then Dash told her that he had bought Berncastler Doctor, and that he was to run at Brighton.

"What colours will he run in?" she asked, much interested.

"I forgot that! We must choose some colours."

"Let me see," Delia said, "I think bronze, with French grey sleeves and a red cap would look pretty; you must have colours which you can distinguish at a distance, and a red cap is always a help."

"Very well, we will decide on those. I will register them when I go to Weatherby's, but I doubt whether I shall be able to get them made in time for Tuesday."

"It does not matter about that really. Perhaps it would be nicer if Berncastler Doctor ran in his trainer's colours, so that the Fortuna filly's jockey may have a brand new jacket when she runs."

"I think it would be the best way," answered Dash; and so it was agreed.

While they were watching the horses being got ready for the first race, they were joined by John Straight, his cheery face beaming with pleasure.

"I have just had a talk with Joe Tritton," he said, "and he tells me your filly goes like a smasher. I hope she will turn out to be one!"

"Yes. I came in the train with him to-day, and he is going to buy Berncastler Doctor to lead her in her work."

"Hum," said John Straight, "the old Doctor will do well enough for that, but when it comes

to trying her, you will want a clock that will really tell you the correct Greenwich time."

"But I suppose it is hard to get a reliable trial horse?" asked Dash.

"You leave it to me," chuckled old John; "I can find you something to try with, when the time comes," and he smiled knowingly.

"What can you get for us?" asked Delia.

"I should ask Sir Robert to let me lend you one of our good-class horses, and you will be able to find out exactly what sort of a chance you have got. But there is plenty of time to think about that."

"Is there anything that you fancy to-day, Mr. Straight?" asked Delia.

"Yes," he answered, "I think Phaeton will win; he is in the last race."

"Thank you, we will back him."

Phaeton won the Molecombe Stakes, as John Straight had anticipated, and then the delightful meeting came to an end, and carriages, char-à-bancs, and omnibuses hurried helter-skelter down the hill towards Chichester, leaving the great rolling downs and the lovely race-course to pass the next twelve months in a solitude only to be broken by the occasional intrusion of a stray shepherd or a wandering golfer.

Sir Robert and Lord Thistleton started for Aix-les-Bains the next week, and spent a month there,

having their daily morning baths and *massage à l'eau* in the hot spring water, and driving out in the afternoon along the shores of the beautiful Lac de Bourget, or being carried in the cog-wheeled mountain railway to the summit of the mighty Mont Revard, from which can be obtained a view of the great snow-covered mass of Mont Blanc, forty miles away, but towering over the intervening mountains, like a great hulking schoolmaster playing football in a team of little boys. Then they would spend the evening at the theatre, or the Villa des Fleurs, and toddle off to bed at a respectably early hour.

Dash went to Brighton on the Tuesday following the Goodwood meeting, travelling by a midday train which enabled him to reach the race-course just in time to see Berncastler Doctor run. Tritton thought highly of the horse's chance, but the opposition, which was limited to four horses, was of notoriously poor quality, and so odds of six to four had to be laid on the Doctor.

Whilst Dash was in the ring, laying such sixties to forty as he could, the race was started, and he was not able to see any part of it, for the ring is so placed that its occupants might as well be at Timbuctoo as on the course, for all the view they get of the racing.

However, Dash knew the horses were coming, from seeing that everyone in the stand had glasses

up, and presently there was a shout of "The Doctor wins! the Doctor rolls in!" and above the heads of the bookmakers, who were standing against the rails, the black cap of Berncastler Doctor's jockey, who was wearing Tritton's colours, could be seen to flash by, and there was the thumping of feet as the horse galloped past the winning-post.

Dash ran to the paddock to meet his horse coming in, and Tritton remarked, "That is all I wanted to know. The old horse is still in form, and your filly is sure to win a good race."

Dash jumped into a cab and hurried to the station, for he wanted to catch the 3.40 train to town, so as to get to chambers before Twitterton left.

In the meantime, Mrs. Baines had taken Delia with her to Scotland, and, after a few days at North Berwick, they went on to St. Andrews, where they took rooms at the Grand Hotel, overlooking the celebrated golf links, and the beautiful bay, with its long grey sands flecked by innumerable white gulls, stretching away with its fringe of bent-grown dunes to where the surging quicksands mark the mouth of the river Eden.

Mr. Twitterton and Dash also went to the City by the Sea as soon as the commencement of the Long Vacation released them from attendance at the Courts, and the month of August slipped pleasantly away; what with a strenuous round of golf between the men in the morning, and a four-

some with the ladies over the new course in the afternoon, and then putting on the ladies' links after tea, until the light faded out of the sky, and it was time for dinner.

September came, and the Doncaster meeting, and a glance at the pages of Ruff will tell that Samoa won the St. Leger in gallant style, and then the party re-assembled at Oakwood for partridge shooting.

Dash heard regularly from Tritton, and the news of the Fortuna filly was very encouraging, for she had done as well in her training as anyone could wish. She had been contemptuously treated by the handicapper, for her two public appearances could not command any respect from him, and she had been allotted the bottom weight, of six stone, in the Cambridgeshire, in which race Helvellyn was set to carry eight stone eight; his Hunt Cup failure having brought him down in the scale.

CHAPTER XXVL

THE ROMAN CAMP.!

DASH went down to Poledown on a Friday night early in October to see his filly tried on the following morning.

John Straight had been as good as his word about supplying trial tackle, and Phantom City had arrived at the Sussex training stables the day previous.

His departure from Cottington had been duly observed by the "correspondents" of that stable, and notice of his having left his own quarters, and of the arrival of an unknown chestnut horse at Poledown, were chronicled in the training intelligence of the sporting press.

Delia, not ignorant of the proposed trial, was staying with Mrs. Vasher Baines at the Marine Hotel at Gatherstone, and it had been arranged that Dash was to go straight to the hotel after the trial, to report upon its results and to have breakfast with the ladies there.

Dash reached Gatherstone late on Friday evening,

and a small pony cart met him and conveyed him to Poledown, where he found Joe Tritton waiting to receive him.

After a supper of kidneys and bacon, with a glass of whisky and apollinaris water, Mr. Tritton produced some cigars, and trainer and employer sat down in a couple of arm chairs to discuss the future.

"My principal difficulty has been to get a good jockey for the filly," said Joe Tritton, "for it is hard to find a boy who has had any experience in big races, and can do the weight, who is not retained; however, I was lucky enough to be able to engage young Pat Rooney; he rode Flannigan's Pride when he won the Royal Hunt Cup, and he is about as good a boy as one could want."

"I saw him at Kempton," answered Dash; "but he was all over the place then."

"Oh, yes; a little boy on a big yawning horse is not infallible, but he has grown a good deal stronger since then; and, besides, our filly does not want such a deal of riding."

"All right, I should think the boy would do very well; at any rate, he is determined," Dash said.

"Yes, he is determined, and he does not know what fear is—he has no nerves!"

"How are you going to try them to-morrow?" asked Dash.

"Well, I thought of setting the Phantom to give a stone. I don't expect to beat him at that, but if the filly gets within a length or so, it will be pretty good business."

"I suppose that would be putting Phantom City in the Cambridgeshire at about seven stone six?" asked Dash.

"Yes; or seven—he might win with that, but if she happens to beat him, I should think you had a pretty good thing. Have you backed her at all yet?"

"Yes," said Dash, "I have had a commission out to take up the long shots. My agent, Mr. Nuthall, got a little money on at forty to one and a thousand to thirty, and he has backed her quietly to win about thirty thousand pounds. I think the money averages a little over twenty-five to one."

"A very nice little bet, too!" remarked the trainer. "And I see she stands at twenty to one to-day."

"I have arranged to write to Nuthall, one word, 'Go,' if she wins her trial, and he is to continue backing her."

"Very good; and I hope it may be 'go,'" said Tritton, pouring out a glass of whisky.

Dash joined him in a nightcap, and then went to the neat little bed-room which he was to occupy, and dreamed of the Fortuna filly and Delia all night.

The next morning they were up betimes, and

after having had a look at the horses in their stables, which were comfortable, but old-fashioned buildings, Mr. Tritton and Dash walked on to the down which was just at the back of the house, and went to a spot on the edge of the ride, where the galloping ground was overshadowed by a high conical hill, on the summit of which there was an ancient Roman camp, to see the trial for the Cambridgeshire.

Meanwhile, at Gatherstone, Delia had had a sleepless night, thinking of the impending trial which was to take place only five miles away, and at a quarter to six she could bear the suspense no longer, so, determining to see the trial herself, she jumped from her bed and dressed in a suit of tailor-made tweeds, with a short skirt and a well-fitting little jacket. Then, having stuck a Tam-o'-Shanter on her head with many pins, she sallied forth from the Marine Hotel and started off on foot for Poledown.

When she had gone three miles, she began to think that perhaps there might be some short cut, and meeting a carter going to his work, with a pair of farm-horses, she asked him the nearest way to the training grounds.

After some difficulty she was able to make the man understand what she wanted, and, scratching his head he said,

"Yew go in at this ga-ate, and keep right along the hedge till yew git to the clump o' trees. Then

turn up by the big hedge and go on till yew come to planta-ation, then yew cross Roman camp and go down the path to the hill, and yew will be there in no time."

She thanked the carter, and followed his instruction, which turned out to be perfectly correct; and after floundering about in deep ruts for some time, she reached the plantation and was soon in the Roman camp.

There was a high mound round the camp, with a deep foss outside, and a smaller mound beyond, hanging right on the edge of the steep side of the hill.

Delia walked along the inner mound and looked around her.

Behind she saw the low misty country, at the edge of which the still sleeping town of Gatherstone rested beside a sparkling sea which shone with the countless facets of a newly cleft-piece of marble, and the morning sun was just breaking through his fleecy blanket of clouds. All around in front of her was down-land, tumbled in great masses of wide-spread rolling verdure as far as the eye could see.

On the left, ranging above the little village, was the long, narrow, flint built house of Poledown, with its nest of stabling beside it; and below her she saw a string of horses, walking like so many ants along the valley, and she descried the two

figures of Tritton and Dash, making for the brow of the rising ground in front of her, and she recognised Dash, even at the distance that he was away, and guessed who the other was.

She looked for a path by which to descend, but she could see none, and the side of the hill was very steep, so she walked a little farther along the edge of the dyke, and suddenly came upon a man lying flat on the ground with his head just over the chalk bank, and a pair of large race-glasses held to his eyes.

He heard her footfall and turned to see who it was who was approaching, and started as he saw Delia.

"Miss Ashingdon!" he exclaimed. "Good morning, miss; of course you don't know me, but I know you well enough."

"I have never seen you before!" exclaimed Delia.

"That is very likely, but I saw you at Kempton, and again at Alexandra Park, the day John Straight claimed my filly."

"I don't know what you mean, I suppose you are speaking of the Fortuna filly; but I did not know she belonged to you!"

"Oh yes, she did, in a way. I ran her there; my name is Beale—William Beale, of Epsom, and I entered the filly at the Palace just to oblige a man who turned out to be a dead wrong 'un after-

wards. But the horses are coming—I came here on purpose to see what was going on when I heard from my correspondent that Straight had sent Phantom City here, and I must not miss the trial ! ”

He fixed his glasses intently on three little dots which were making their way out of the hollow at a very smart pace.

“ That other chestnut, leading. I suppose that’s the Doctor ? ” he muttered.

Delia, who could not distinguish much that was going on, was glad to have Beale’s help in reading the race to her.

“ Lor ! ” he exclaimed, “ the Doctor can’t live with them ; see, they have passed him, and he is tailed off already ! ”

Delia did see that one horse was a good distance in the rear.

“ The bay is going wonderful well ! ” he said again. “ She holds the Phantom all right. Look ! she is coming right away from him ! ”

And there was no doubt now, for Delia could see, even without glasses, that the bay filly had gone clean by the chestnut horse and was galloping past the two figures on the hill, several lengths in front.

“ There ! ” said Whispers, “ I knew it ! I knew she was a real good mare. What a cruel bit of luck it was our losing her ! But never mind that

now. She will win the Cambridge, and I must get a bit on her as quick as I can ! ”

Delia ran round the old fortification to where she thought that Dash would come up on his way to Gatherstone, and she had not left Mr. Beale far behind when another man's voice fell on her ear, and this time it was a not-unknown one.

“ Who on earth would have expected to see you here, Miss Ashingdon ! ”

She turned and saw Hamilton Rolfe, and quickened her steps.

Rolfe was beside her in a moment. “ I suppose you are here on the same errand as I am, to see the filly tried ? ” he said.

Delia looked at him fearlessly and said, “ Mr. Rolfe, after the way you behaved last time I saw you, I would rather not speak to you again ! ” and she turned her back on him.

“ Don't be a silly little fool ! ” he cried, seizing her by the wrist. “ Providence has put you in my path to-day ! I told you once before that I meant to marry you. Now, on these solitary downs, I tell you so again ! ”

Delia tried to free herself, but he held her like a vice.

“ Let me go ! ” she cried. “ Dashwood Fynes is coming, and I hope he will kill you ! ”

“ Don't try to frighten me with your Dashwood

Fynes! If he comes near me, I will throw him down the cliff!"

Delia made one more violent effort to free herself, but, finding it useless, she dug the nails of her disengaged hand into the cheek of Hamilton Rolfe with the fury of despair, and the blood flowed down his face in three long red stripes.

"You little devil!" he cried. "I'll kill you, if you don't do what I tell you!"

"Dash!!!" screamed Delia, and almost before the name was out of her lips, her lover appeared on the edge of the wall and took in all that it was necessary to know at a glance.

He darted down the ditch and up the other rampart, where Delia was standing in the grip of her adversary, and seizing Rolfe by the neck he hurled him to the ground.

"Kill him, Dash! Kill him!" screamed Delia.

"I will kill him, never fear!" answered Dash, between his teeth.

Rolfe had risen to his feet and Dash rushed at him and sent two fearful blows, right and left, into his blood-stained face, and the bully reeled, but tried to hit back.

Again Dash sent his left right on to Rolfe's right eye, and closed it; but he was not satisfied, and rained blows upon him till he fell a battered heap on the ground.

"Get up, you blackguard!" cried Dash.

Rolfe looked at him through his bruises and blood, but made no sign of resuming the combat.

"He's foxing!" declared Mr. Beale, who, attracted by Delia's cries, had joined the party.

"I'll soon teach him to fox!" cried Dash, beside himself with passion. "Get up, I say, you scoundrel, or I'll pick you up myself!"

Still Rolfe declined to accept the invitation so pressinglly offered, and, whether it may be considered a sportsmanlike action, or within the rules of fighting or no; as a faithful chronicler's first duty is to set down what actually occurs, it must be recorded that Dash lost his patience, and seizing the prostrate Rolfe by the back of the collar, raised him up into an erect position before him and proceeded to kick the hinder portion of his person with a force and precision which would have been the envy of an international footballer.

While Dash was thus busily engaged, and Delia stood pale and trembling after her struggle, what time Mr. Beale was dancing round in a frenzy of excitement, shouting "Give it him, governor, give it him!" yet another person had stolen unnoticed upon the scene, and waited patiently till Dash, exhausted with his efforts, threw his bruised and beaten antagonist upon the ground.

Then he stepped forward; a short, thick-set, laughing-faced man of about thirty-five; and

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walking up to Rolfe, where he lay upon the turf, placed his hand on his shoulder and said,

"I am a detective officer from Scotland Yard; my name is Inspector Rennard, and I hold a warrant for your arrest, Hamilton Rolfe, for forgery. Here is my warrant," and he produced the paper which contained the authority of the sovereign for the arrest of his prisoner, and neatly adjusted a pair of handcuffs on Rolfe's wrists.

"I don't want any handcuffs! I'll go quietly," said Rolfe.

"I think you'd better have them," remarked the inspector, drily; "you might change your mind about going quietly if you did not have these bracelets as a kind of Mizpah between us."

"What's the forgery about?" asked Whispers. "Is it anything to do with Colonel Goring?"

"Yes, the very case!" said the inspector. "Forging a power-of-attorney to sell his securities. The crime was committed in July, but the colonel only came back to England last week, and did not discover it till then."

"I am on in this scene!" said Whispers, jubilantly. "That scoundrel there came and asked me to forge the papers for him before he mucked up courage enough to do it for himself. I can be a witness to that."

"Thank you; I will take your name, please,"

replied Inspector Rennard, taking his note book from his pocket.

"William Beale, Muley Edris, Epsom. I am a tout, I am, and I'm not ashamed of it; and I don't set up to be over particular, within a shade, but when a blackguard like that, calling himself a gentleman, comes and asks me to do his dirty work for him—why, that is outside my line of country, and I shall be glad to speak against him."

"Very well; you will be called to give evidence in a day or two before the magistrate, and when he is committed for trial we shall want you again."

"I never thought I should want to go to the Old Bailey," said Beale, "but I shall enjoy it this time. Good day, I have some messages to send off," and Whispers, taking off his hat politely to Delia, went down the hillside to the telegraph office at Poledown.

Delia and Dash walked back through the plantation towards Gatherstone, and by the time they got to the Marine Hotel, Delia had so recovered her composure that Mrs. Baines did not observe that there was anything the matter with her; and not till she had heard the whole story of the morning's events did she realise what danger Delia had been in.

"Never mind Rolfe," exclaimed Dash, "I must have a telegraph form. Here, waiter, bring me a form."

The paper was brought, and he wrote—

“ ‘ Colville,’ London.

“ Go.

“ Fynes.”

And handed it to the waiter to be sent off.

“ Now,” he said, “ we will have breakfast ! I am very sorry to be so late, Mrs. Baines, but we have explained how we were delayed. ”

“ Yes,” said Mrs. Baines, “ and I only wish I had been with you to see that man get a thrashing. I hope he will get seven years, now ! ”

“ I hardly expect you will see him about again before that time ! ” answered Dash.

“ Oh ! ” cried Delia. “ I hope I shall never set eyes on him again. It frightens me to think of him ! ”

“ Let’s forget all about him, and talk about the Fortuna filly ; I am very anxious to hear all about the trial,” said Mrs. Baines.

And so Dash and Delia gave an account of the gallop, and how the filly had done a great deal more than was expected of her, and how they were going to back her to win them a fortune.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"THE ROYAL EDWARD" CLUB.

It was the Monday before the Cambridgeshire, and Dash had accepted Walter Nuthall's invitation to lunch with him at one of the chief betting clubs, the "Royal Edward," and to receive a report of the progress of the Fortuna commission.

The "Royal Edward" is an imposing edifice, situate in an elevated position at the corner of one of the streets which run down to the Strand, and from its upper windows commanding a view over the house-tops of South London right away to the hideous towers of the Crystal Palace.

Dash walked up the wide steps, and the swing-doors were pulled open by a hall porter in a livery which made him look exactly like a postman, and asked for Mr. Nuthall.

"Henry," said the postman, addressing a tall, heavy-shouldered man, who was evidently a sort of assistant-porter, and who, in lieu of a coat, wore a waistcoat with black calico sleeves, and

silver buttons. "Henry, go into the billiard-room and tell Mr. Nuthall that a gentleman wants him."

Henry shuffled off down a narrow passage from which the sound of many voices came with an echo of the ring, for the settlement was in progress.

Dash looked around him, and found that he was standing in a circular hall which reminded him of nothing so much as the Temple of Vesta; and he laughed as he thought of his friends, the book-makers, as the virgins who tend the sacred flame on its altar. It had marble pillars and an arched and domed roof, while the floor was tessellated with coloured tiles. There was a little glass case in which the hall-porter was wont to sit, and through the window of which he handed their letters to members and delivered messages.

The hall was crowded with portmanteaus, travelling-bags, rugs, and hat-boxes, for most of the members were going to Newmarket as soon as they had transacted their business at the club.

Mr. Nuthall came hurrying along the passage with his settling book in his hand.

"I hope I have not kept you waiting?" he said.

"Not at all; but have you finished your settling?" asked Dash.

"Oh, yes; it was not a heavy settlement this week—nothing to what it will be next! But do come upstairs. Luncheon will be quite ready for us," and he led the way up a wide-stepped stone

spiral staircase, and along a passage to a large room with two long tables and several small ones, together with a side-board on which were lobsters, cold beef, a York ham, and other viands.

Mr. Nuthall motioned Dash to a seat at one of the small tables, and sat opposite to him.

The walls of the room were hung round with magnificent oil paintings of bygone heroes of the turf, and there were one or two large silver cups and bowls which had been presented to the club by various members, to commemorate some event of more than ordinary importance to the fraternity of the betting-ring.

Presently a waiter came, bearing a silver soup tureen.

"Oyster soup?" said Nuthall, as he ladled out the white broth in which floated the best Whitstable natives, "they make it rather well here."

"Thank you," replied Dash; "there is no soup I like better," and indeed, when he had tasted it, as prepared by the cook of the "Royal Edward" Club, he was inclined to go a step farther and to say that there was no soup that he liked so well.

"The wine, waiter," said Mr. Nuthall, and the subdued fizzing of a carefully-opened bottle of champagne was heard, as the waiter poured out large goblets of red-brown sparkling wine.

"What a curious colour!" commented Dash.

"Partridge eye," explained Mr. Nuthall; "it

used to be a favourite brand here. Don't you know it? It is Moet's."

Dash confessed that he did not know it, but was quite willing, and even anxious, to make its acquaintance, so Mr. Nuthall raised his cornelian-coloured wine and said,

"Well, here's to the Fortuna filly!"

"Amen!" said Dash, as he placed his glass to his lips.

"That wine is delicious!" he exclaimed.

"Glad you like it. I thought you would. But here come our chops—we rather pride ourselves on our chops here."

The waiter placed a plate containing an enormous chop before each of them, and then handed mashed potatoes and beans. When he left the room, Mr. Nuthall began, taking his betting book from his pocket.

"I have backed your filly for you to win, altogether, forty-five thousand pounds. Here are the bets; I should like you to look over them. Do you want any more on? She stands at a hundred to nine."

"Oh, yes; you might back her to win another fifteen thousand or so," said Dash.

"Very well; I will do the best I can for you, then," answered Mr. Nuthall.

When they had had some prime Stilton cheese and celery, followed by a cup of coffee, Mr. Nuthall

proposed that they should go downstairs and have a cigar.

"I should be very glad," said Dash, "but I must not ~~stop~~ long, as I have to go to Redford this afternoon—the assizes begin there to-morrow."

"That won't interfere with your going to New-market, I ~~suppose~~?" asked Nuthall.

"Not on Wednesday—I shall take good care that it does not; but I shall have to be in court to-morrow."

"What a pity!" exclaimed Walter.

"Can't be helped, I am afraid," said Dash.

"Well, come along, and we will see how they are betting," Nuthall exclaimed, and he led the way downstairs and through the hall to a large room in the middle of which there was a billiard table, and leather seats all the length of the wall, with bookmakers seated in a row, like so many linnets on a perch, except that their voices were not so melodious.

There was a tape-machine in one corner, and a bar in another, where several members were sitting on high chairs and absorbing cooling refreshment.

Presently a little, round-faced man whom Nature, for some reason, had doomed always to walk on tip-toe, danced up to Nuthall, with a betting book in his hand.

"Do you want to back to something before I close my boot?" he lisped, for Mr. Potton had an im-

pediment in his speech, which, however, did not prevent his being a very dangerous wielder of the pencil.

"What will you lay me the Fortuna filly?" asked Nuthall, carelessly.

"Fortuna? I'll bet you a thoutand to ninety!"

"Well, you may book that," said Nuthall; "but will you join me and my friend in a glass of kummel?"

"Timmel! in bitnet hour? No thank you; but I'll take a tup of toffee, with pleadure."

"A cup of coffee and two glasses of kummel, please, miss," said Walter Nuthall, to the lady at the bar.

"Hullo!" cried Potton, suddenly, "I 'mell a rat! I'll bet a tovereign to tickpent you've got the 'table tommission!"

Nuthall smiled.

"I tay, though, id that the 'table tommission? Betaute if it id, I tant 'tand again't it!"

"Yes," said Nuthall; "you had better cover your money."

"What's that you are backing?" asked Joe Thackeray.

"The Fortuna filly," answered Nuthall.

"I'll lay you ten thousand to one, that one, if you've got a commission to do," said Thackeray.

Nuthall looked at Dash, who nodded assent.

"Write it down then," said Walter ; "you know Mr. Fynes here, I think ?"

"Oh, yes ; I have had the pleasure of making several bets with him," replied the bookmaker, and turning to Dash : "I hope I am not indiscreet in saying that the assumed name of 'Mr. Chambers' is no disguise to me ?"

Dash laughed. "No," he said ; "but I hope that it will not get about in the Temple that I am on the turf."

"So far as the Ring is concerned," went on Mr. Thackeray, "you may make your mind easy ; we know plenty of secrets much more important than that, but we don't open our mouths much except to shout the odds. I am sure I hope your filly may win."

Just then two bookmakers rose from their seats and joined the group at the bar.

"Can I lay you anything for the Cambridge-shire ?" inquired one of them of Nuthall.

"Well, I have just taken ten thousand to one the Fortuna filly," replied the commissioner.

"A big bet ; I could not offer you that, but I should like to lay you half of it."

"Very well, I will take ten monkeys," said Walter, quietly.

"Put it down then, I am just off to New-market, good-bye," and the bookmakers left the room.

"Do you know those two?" asked Nuthall of Dash.

"Only by sight; I have never betted with them," said Dash.

"We call them the snake-eaters; their real names are Fletcher and Rowland. Fletcher is the big chap with the grey beard, and Rowland is the fat one with the beady eyes."

"Why do you call them the snake-eaters?" Dash inquired.

"Oh it is an old story. I think it has been in the *Roseleaf* before now."

"I don't know it, though; tell it to me."

"Well," began Walter Nuthall, "those two men are partners, and they are both very keen bettors, they will wager about anything; so, once when they were taking a holiday together in the west of England, they came upon a dead snake which had been run over by some passing waggon, and cut in half. Rowland looked at it and said to Fletcher, 'I will bet you a sovereign you won't eat the head of that snake!' 'Done with you,' says Fletcher, and pops the beastly thing in his mouth and swallows it. Then he turns to his partner and says, 'I'll bet you another quid you don't eat the other half.' Bill Rowland picked up the other bit and ate it, and when it came to settling they found that neither owed the other anything, and they had eaten a rotten snake between them!"

Dash laughed heartily at the tale.

"I think I must go now," he said; "I am glad to have seen this club. Good-bye—I suppose you will be at Newmarket?"

"Why, certainly!" said Nuthall. "I have followed your tip and backed your mare to win me a nice little stake. Good-bye!"

And Dash went back to the Temple and later left for Redford, where he went to the hotel at which the barristers of his circuit had their mess.

He found a lot of his friends there, and a jovial dinner was the result, followed by the old port wine which the members of the Circuit Bar keep in their own private cellars in every town to which the pursuit of their profession takes them at the time of the assizes.

Later on, cards and dominoes were produced, but the mess butler brought a note from a local solicitor to Dash with the intimation that the gentleman was waiting in a neighbouring smoking-room to see him.

Dash went down and found that Mr. Gorrings, the attorney, had come to call on him to entrust him with the defence of a man charged with horse-stealing. It was a simple case and ought never to have been sent for trial, for there was a perfect answer to the charge. Of course Dash accepted it, and retired to his bed-room with the papers more fully to acquaint himself with the facts.

The next day, with a flourish of trumpets, the sheriff's carriage drew up at the Court House, and Mr. Justice Stokes, in all the magnificence of red robes, and black silk stockings, entered the Court and took his seat on the Bench.

Cases dragged on through the day, but the one in which Dash was to appear was not called, and he began to fear that it would not be reached until the next day; when, as we know, he had a very pressing engagement at Newmarket.

When four o'clock drew near, and there was no sign of his case coming on, he wrote a note to the Clerk of Assize and passed it up to him, asking him to be kind enough to call on the case of *Rex v. Quigly* next.

Sir Philip Stokes saw the note passed, and asked abruptly, "What's that?"

Dash rose, and said, "May it please your lordship, I have asked that the case of *Rex v. Quigly* may be taken next. I appear for the defendant, and I am very anxious that it should be taken to-day, as I have an important engagement to-morrow, which will make it impossible for me to appear."

"No, no!" said Sir Philip, exasperatingly. "The order of the cases cannot be changed to suit individuals; you must wait your turn!"

Dash looked very crestfallen, and he bowed and left the court, returning in a few moments

in his overcoat, and whispering some words in the ear of the solicitor who had retained him.

The solicitor nodded, and Dash went away; but only to the robing-room, where he quickly resumed his wig and gown and waited anxiously for the success of his manœuvre.

He knew the character of the learned judge well, and he was not at all surprised when he heard, at the conclusion of the case which was then in progress, the usher call "The King against Quigly."

Sir Philip was chuckling to himself, thinking that he had scored off young Fynes, whom he supposed to be on his way to London, but as the crier called the case for the third time, Dash, fully robed, walked quietly into Court and took his place, prepared to conduct the defence of the falsely-accused Quigly.

It was a short case, and Dash had no difficulty in proving that Quigly had acted *bonâ fide*, in retaining possession of a horse which had strayed upon his ground, and as soon as a verdict of not guilty was given, Dash jumped into a cab and hastened to the railway station, where he caught a train to London, and got back to his rooms at about eight o'clock.

After a hasty dinner, Dash went down to Chester Square, for it had been agreed that he should call there on his return to town, to make arrangements

for taking the ladies to Newmarket on the following day.

Twitterton was at Mrs. Baines', and when he heard how Dash had "spoofed" Mr. Justice Stokes into taking his case, he laughed heartily.

"I don't think you need have been afraid of not getting away in time to see the Cambridgeshire run for, anyhow, though," he said. "Dear old Sir Philip would take care that he had a free afternoon to-morrow, even if he had to sit in Court all night to complete the list."

"How are we going down to-morrow?" asked Mrs. Baines. "Have you settled that?"

"If we could all meet at Liverpool Street at ten o'clock, we could go down in a luncheon car and have a snack on the way," said Dash.

"By all means," said Mrs. Baines. "Delia and I will take care to be in good time."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

NEWMARKET.

MRS. BAINES and Delia did not fail to reach Liverpool Street station punctually at ten o'clock, so that they were in plenty of time for the Newmarket Special.

They found Dash and Mr. Twitterton waiting for them, and were glad that Dash had reserved a table in the luncheon car, for the train was very full.

After a pleasant run through somewhat uninteresting scenery, and having lunched on board, they hired a carriage for the day and were driven to the course.

Delia had no wish to go into the Stand or Pad-dock, for she did not desire to meet her father. Sir Robert, as was his wont, was staying at Newmarket for the meeting, in company with his old friend, Lord Thistleton, and had no idea that his daughter intended to see the race for the Cambridgeshire.

"If our filly wins, we shall not care who knows that we are there," said Delia; "but if she gets

beaten, I want to slink back to London by the next train, without dad knowing that I have been here."

"Very well, dear; we will sit in our fly on the course until after the race, and Sir Robert will not be likely to see us there, for he is sure to spend all his time in the Birdcage and the Jockey Club Stand," replied Mrs. Baines.

"And I will act as runner for you," said Twiterton, "and go to and fro, picking up information and bringing it to you."

"I will also report progress at frequent intervals," joined in Dash.

The carriage drew up near the rails, just below the Stands, so that the ladies would have a very good view of the race, and unless it resulted in a very close finish, would be able to see what horse won.

Dash went into the Paddock and sought out Joe Tritton, who gave him most reassuring accounts of the welfare of the filly, who had eaten up well that morning, and never looked or went better in her life.

They were joined by John Straight, who inquired after the filly, and was told how exceedingly well she was.

"I thought I had a chance with Helvellyn," said the old trainer, "but from what you tell me of how your filly went with Phantom City, I can't beat you!"

"I think she is a real good mare, John," answered Joe Tritton, "and I am very thankful to you for putting her in my way. If she wins this race to-day, it will be a great lift to me, and goodness knows I want one!"

"And you deserve one, Joe. But at any rate your filly does you credit. I saw her on the Heath this morning, and she looks splendid!"

"Yes," replied Tritton, looking very pleased at John's well-merited praise, "she is a rare doer, and a good constituted mare. I never have any trouble except to give her work enough, and as for old Berncastler Doctor, I should think he will thank his stars that his job is finished, for he would not have been able to stand another week of it."

"Well, he has earned a rest, and he shall have it," said Dash, and he went back to the carriage to keep the ladies company.

Lord Thistleton and Sir Robert came into the Paddock after the first race, in high spirits and laughing like a couple of schoolboys; for the Newmarket air always acted as a tonic to the old associates, who had seen more meetings on the wind-swept heath than they would care to count.

John Straight and Joe Tritton were in the farther paddock, and they raised their hats as the two gentlemen joined them.

"How are ye, Tritton?" asked Sir Robert, cheerily. John he had seen earlier.

"Very well, thank you, sir. I have to thank you for so very kindly lending me a trial horse too, Sir Robert. I don't know what I should have done without him."

"Oh, very glad; very glad!" Sir Robert replied. "I hear that you have a pretty good filly?"

"Yes, sir; if she bears out what Phantom City told me about her, she will win this race to-day."

"Well, I am glad to hear it. I should like to see Helvellyn take the race, of course; but it is always pleasant to see new blood successful. I hear that this Mr. Chambers is quite a young man?"

"Oh, yes; only about twenty-six. He has not owned horses till this year."

"Well, well. I wish him luck!" cried Sir Robert, as he moved away.

The second race had been run, and Dash and Delia did not attempt to disguise their nervousness. Dash kept getting down from the carriage and hurrying to the Paddock, where he would look at the filly for a few minutes, and then bolt back to Delia to tell her that she was still all right.

Twitterton was almost as excited as the others, and Mrs. Baines chattered incessantly.

But at length the horses were saddled and mounted, and made their way on to the course.

It was a splendid sight to see these thirty of the world's best animals going down to the post

to do battle for the greatest handicap of the season.

Delia clapped her hands as the bonny bay filly came dashing down the course, with little Pat Rooney in his new cap and jacket, sitting very still upon her.

"Oh, is not she lovely!" exclaimed the ladies with one voice; "and what pretty colours they are!"

Then came the great Helvellyn, with Leicester Gatling on his back—a magnificent specimen of the thoroughbred horse. He cantered down with thundering strides.

Presently, they were all assembled at the starting-post, and in a few minutes the rainbow line of silken jackets was seen to dart suddenly forward and the horses were on their way.

Onward they came, up and down the gradients of the course, along the rolled track, which looks greener than the rest of the heath on account of the attention which is paid to it to keep it in order.

For some time, even almost until they had reached the bushes, Delia could not see the Fortuna filly's colours, but she could see that Helvellyn was out by himself on the far side, going strong and well.

Although he was her father's horse, she felt sick to see him there, and her own favourite not in the first flight.

At length she saw Rooney's red cap behind some horses on the near side, and he was evidently looking for an opening to come through. As they descended the hill into the dip the front rank separated, and Rooney got his chance.

He steered for the opening, and as the field passed the carriage, Rooney let the filly out, and she sailed past her neighbours in the smoothest manner possible and was level with Helvellyn, but wide apart.

"She wins! Fortuna filly wins!" screamed Delia, not caring what anybody thought of her. "Go on, Rooney! Go on!"

Whether this advice reached Rooney or not, he certainly did not neglect to act in accordance with it, and the beautiful filly breasted the hill like a hare and passed the winning post three lengths in advance of Helvellyn, who was second.

Mr. Twitterton threw his hat into the air, and shouted "Hooray!" with all his might, and Dash would have done the same, but his emotion deprived him of the power of speech.

"Be quiet, John!" said Mrs. Baines, "how can you behave like that? Why don't you run to see the winner come in? Delia and I will follow!"

At these words, Dash suddenly recovered his faculties, and shouting, "Come on! come to the Paddock!" he jumped out of the carriage and ran through the carriages and round the back of the

stands to the gate of the Birdcage, and his filly was just coming across from the course-gate to weigh in as he reached the weighing-room door.

Dash leaned upon the rail of the unsaddling enclosure, and looked at the beautiful mare who had made it possible for him to indulge the most cherished desire of his heart, and a great gulp of gratitude was in his throat, but his pale face and slightly trembling lip did not betray a tithe of the agitation which was consuming him.

Lord Thistleton and Sir Robert came out of the Jockey Club stand.

"Hard luck, old man, being beaten when it looked as if Helvellyn had the race at his mercy at the Bushes."

"I am not at all surprised," answered Sir Robert. "John Straight asked me to lend them Phantom City to try this filly. It seems that she belongs to a friend of John's—I don't know him, but I think he is quite a young fellow—and she won a good trial with the old horse; so we knew there was danger in that quarter; but here is old Stokes, grinning all over his face—I told him we were afraid of this filly, and, by the look of him, he must have backed her!"

"Hullo!" cried Sir Philip Stokes. "I backed first and second on your tip, Bob! I am sorry they did not finish the other way about, though!"

"This is a good filly," answered Sir Robert, "and it was asking Helvellyn too much to expect him to give her twenty-six pounds. I don't believe any horse in England could do it!"

"They say the owner won a pile of money on her," remarked the judge, "and I hear that it is almost his first appearance on the turf. Fancy having the luck to win a Cambridgeshire to begin one's racing career!"

"He is a friend of John Straight's, I must be introduced to him," said Sir Robert. "I want to congratulate him on his good fortune!"

"There's Straight, with Helvellyn," cried Lord Thistleton; "let us ask him to introduce us."

"John!" said Sir Robert.

"Yes, sir," answered John.

"I want to congratulate your friend, Mr. Chambers; you had better introduce me to him. I was so near owning his filly myself that I take great interest in her."

John Straight's face twisted into a comical smile, as he said, "You know that 'Mr. Chambers' is only an assumed name, but I think I had better call him by it, as he may prefer not to have his real name known."

"All right, where is he?" asked Sir Robert.

"There he is, over there in a grey overcoat, leaning on the rail," answered John, pointing to Dash, who had his back to them.

"Come on, then ; I want to speak to him. You do the honours, John."

Mr. Straight went up and touched Dash on the shoulder, and he instantly turned round and was face to face with Sir Robert, Lord Thistleton, and Sir Philip Stokes.

"Dashwood Fynes !" they exclaimed, in chorus. "Why, how the devil ! Surely you are not Mr. Chambers ?"

"Yes, indeed, I am, though, Sir Robert," replied Dash.

"And you are the owner of the Fortuna filly ?" ejaculated Sir Robert.

"And you have jolly near broken the ring !" exclaimed Lord Thistleton.

"And you had the impudence to humbug me in my own Court yesterday, so that you should be able to get here to-day !" said Sir Philip Stokes. "I don't know what the young men at the Bar are coming to !"

Just then Mr. Twitterton came up, with Mrs. Baines and Delia.

When Delia saw her father talking to Dash, she knew that the cat was out of the bag, so she went boldly up to them.

"You here, Delia ? Whatever are you doing here ?" demanded her father.

"I came with Mrs. Baines ; we wanted to see the Cambridgeshire run."

"And did you know that this enterprising young gentleman was the owner of the winner?" asked Sir Robert.

"Oh, yes, dad," she said, taking her father's arm coaxingly, "I planned it all with him."

"You planned it with him? Pray, what have you to do with planning things with him?"

"Only that he had not much money, and we thought if he bought a race-horse and won a race with it, he would get some; and now he has won it, and he will never bet any more!"

"I expect he will have enough work to do now to keep him pretty busy at chambers," put in Mr. Twitterton.

"Oh, by the way, Twitterton, I see that you have been granted silk—let me offer my felicitations!" said Sir Philip, heartily.

"Thanks—yes; and so Fynes will step into my junior practice."

"Well done, Fynes!" said the judge. "I should think this is the greatest day of your life!"

"There is one thing that I want more than either practice at the bar or winning the Cambridgeshire," Dash said quietly, while Delia, who knew what he meant, blushed violently.

"What is that?" asked Sir Robert. "I should have thought you had enough to make you happy, for one day."

Dash took Delia's hand, and, said simply,

"I want Delia—I want your consent to her being my wife—everything else is nothing to me!"

"Bravo!" cried Lord Thistleton. "Well spoken, my lad—go on, Bob; give him your consent—don't keep him in suspense on a day like this!"

Sir Robert took Dash's hand and shook it warmly. "Lord Thistleton is right," he said. "It is not often that a young man wins a Cambridgeshire and a wife on the same day, but you can have her!"

Delia pressed her father's arm, and said, "Thank you, dad!"

"There is another secret which I think ought to be made known," said Sir Philip Stokes. "I don't think Twitterton ought to keep his news from us on a day like this!"

"No; I agree with you," said Twitterton. "I think I ought to tell you that I have the great happiness to be engaged to be married to the charming lady next to me."

"Mrs. Baines!" exclaimed Lord Thistleton. "Oh, well; next to marrying you myself, I would like Twitterton to marry you—let me congratulate you both!"

"Come along, let us all go back to London and finish up the day with a dinner at the Carlton!" cried Sir Robert. "I feel as if I should like to have all the most indigestible kickshaws they can give us, just to celebrate this great day."

"Bravo, dad, and we must have Mr. Straight and Mr. Tritton, too; and, of course, our commissioner, Mr. Nuthall!"

"Yes, you had better find Nuthall, Dashwood, and invite him; and you go and tell Tritton, John," said Sir Robert.

"I am sorry, but I know Joe Tritton will not be able to be one of the party," said John Straight. "I made an appointment for him to call on Lord Vange in the evening, to arrange to take over his horses; and he could not break it, even for the pleasure of joining your party."

"Very well; you will come, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes; I shall be delighted. I feel as if I had had a good share in bringing about this marriage, for I was in Miss Delia's confidence the whole time!"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself for not telling me, then! But come along, let us go to our traps. We will meet at the station—Lord Thistleton and I must call at our rooms first to tell the servants we are going to town; John, we can give you a lift!"

And so they separated for the time being, and as the fly which carried Dash and Delia, with Mr. Twitterton and Mrs. Baines, left the race-course, poor old Gravy was amongst the crowd, twanging his guitar and singing the song which he had sung in the train, going to Epsom.

“ ‘It's your beauty,’ he said, ‘I admire, not your pelf;
Though, of course, if it's handy to find on the shelf,
I could do with a bit of cold mutton myself,
For I'm feeling quite fagged out and jady!’ ”

“ Poor old chap,” said Dash. “ Here, Gravy !
I want you ! ”

The minstrel stopped singing, and approached the carriage, doffing his tall hat.

“ Here's a fiver for you,” said Dash.

“ And here's another ! ” echoed Mr. Twitterton ;
“ for the sake of auld lang syne ! ”

“ Thank you, gentlemen, thank you ! And thank you, beautiful ladies ! ” cried the singer, overjoyed.

“ Good luck to the Fortuna filly ! ”

The carriage drove away and soon reached the station, whither Sir Robert had sent a messenger to engage a reserved carriage ; and the happy party reached London in good time to assemble at the Carlton at eight o'clock for the best dinner the hotel could offer them.

Then when the dessert had been put upon the table, Sir Philip Stokes raised his glass and said, “ I propose the health of the two happy pairs, coupled with the name of the winner of the Cambridgeshire—by the way, she must have a name—what is it to be ? ”

“ Delia promised to tell us after the race,” said Mrs. Baines.

"Very well. Miss Ashingdon, I call upon you to name the filly, and I will couple that name with the toast!"

Delia blushed. "I thought of a name for her," she said, "but I don't know whether it is a good one."

"What is it? Let us hear the name!" said Sir Philip.

"It is 'True Love,'" answered Delia, red to the roots of her hair.

"Coupled with True Love!" concluded Sir Philip exultingly.

"True Love!" exclaimed the men, as they raised their glasses, and the ladies shyly echoed the word.

THE END.



